

REPORT DISEASE AND HEALTH HAZARD NEWS OF INTEREST ALONG THE BORDER

January 11 - 17, 2024

WEEKLY EVENTS

- On January 14, 2024, the Ministry of Public Health launched the project, "Bring Doctors to the People in Celebration of the Auspicious Occasion of His Majesty the King's 6th Cycle Birthday Anniversary, July 28, 2024." The objective is to provide remote communities with access to medical care from volunteer specialist doctors. The project includes seven basic clinics:
 1. Liver and bile duct cancer screening clinic
 2. Cervical cancer screening clinic
 3. Colorectal cancer screening clinic
 4. Breast cancer screening clinic
 5. Eye clinic for children and the elderly
 6. Dentistry clinic
 7. Bone and joint clinic
- Additionally, clinics for other medical services have been organized according to the specific needs of each area. The project aims to enhance opportunities for disease screening and address important health issues in the community. In case individuals exhibit abnormal symptoms beyond the capacity of the clinics, there is a referral system in place to redirect them to nearby hospitals. The project was simultaneously launched in four regions across the country: Northern region in Li District, Lamphun Province; Central region in Chai Badan District, Lopburi Province; Southern region in Wiang Sa District, Surat Thani Province; and Northeastern region in Sikhiu District, Nakhon Ratchasima Province. The activities under this project will be carried out throughout the year 2024, totaling 72 times across the 77 provinces. The implementation of this project has received collaboration from various network organizations, including the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation, the Ministry of Culture, the Royal Thai Police, and the civil society.

TREATING TUBERCULOSIS BY ADHERING TO THE TREATMENT PLAN

The ASEAN Biodiaspora Virtual Center reported a cluster of tuberculosis cases in the community around the ABC Brickworks Hawker Center, Singapore. The area has a dense population of residents. From February 2021 to July 2023, 28 tuberculosis cases were identified. In response to additional cases, the Ministry of Health in Singapore has conducted tuberculosis screening for the community and at the ABC Brickworks center from January 11 to 15, to detect and plan treatment for newly confirmed patients to prevent the spread of the disease.

In Thailand, the Ministry of Public Health, through the Department of Disease Control, implemented a 5-year strategic TB plan from 2017 to 2021. The goals included reducing tuberculosis incidence, mortality, drug shortage, and preventing drug resistance by 2021.

Tuberculosis is a chronic infectious disease caused by the bacterium *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* and can affect various organs in the body. Pulmonary tuberculosis is considered the most dangerous and is often found in the elderly, infants, close contacts of tuberculosis patients, individuals living in crowded areas, those with weakened immune systems, diabetes patients, and AIDS patients. The tuberculosis bacterium is transmitted to the body through the inhalation of airborne particles containing the bacteria, released when an infected person coughs, sneezes, talks, or spits. In the early stages, there may be no symptoms, but after a certain period, symptoms such as night sweats, weight loss, fever, fatigue, chest pain, coughing, and sometimes coughing up blood may appear.

However, tuberculosis can be completely cured if patients fully complete the treatment course according to the treatment plan for at least six months. If medication is missed or not taken continuously, there is a risk of developing drug-resistant tuberculosis. If the treatment goals are not achieved, the chances of recovery from the disease decrease, and the treatment duration may be prolonged. Therefore, during the treatment, patients must take medication as prescribed by the doctor regularly without stopping the medication themselves, even if they feel that their symptoms are not improving. Regular check-ups are essential until the doctor can confirm that they are cured of the disease. Patients with tuberculosis can be confident that the disease will be cured if they adhere strictly to the treatment plan, which will help reduce the overall number of tuberculosis patients in the country.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OFFICIALS

The local authorities should coordinate public health officers and relevant agencies to collectively provide information to the community. The focus is on educating tuberculosis patients and family members about the causes of tuberculosis, recognizing early symptoms, and ensuring proper treatment for tuberculosis patients to prevent the development of drug-resistant tuberculosis. It is essential to train healthcare personnel, including community health volunteers, to monitor tuberculosis patients in the community and adhere to the "Guidelines for Tuberculosis Control in Thailand, 2021."

For residents diagnosed with tuberculosis, there should be home visits to encourage medication adherence according to the treatment plan and scheduled doctor visits to monitor treatment progress. In addition, strict adherence to the "Guidelines for Tuberculosis Control in Thailand, 2021" is necessary when encountering tuberculosis cases in the community.

Community members and residents living with tuberculosis patients must be informed of proper practices, including the continued use of face masks, especially when patients enter crowded areas. If any member of the household or community observes abnormal symptoms related to tuberculosis, immediate notification to the local public health authorities is crucial.

INFORMATION COLLECTED AND ANALYZED BY

Multisectoral Capacity Development Program for Public Health Emergency Detection and Response in Border Areas

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Supported by the Thailand MOPH - US CDC Collaboration on Public Health

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Sources

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