

REPORT DISEASE AND HEALTH HAZARD NEWS OF INTEREST ALONG THE BORDER

January 18 - 24, 2024

WEEKLY EVENTS

- On January 22, 2024, the COVID-19 situation showed an increasing trend in the number of cases as expected in the past week (January 14-20, 2024). The number of hospitalized patients increased to an average of 102 cases per day, totaling 718 cases, up from 93 cases per day in the previous week. Among these, there were 209 severe cases with pneumonia, 149 requiring respiratory assistance, and 11 fatalities. The majority of the deceased were elderly individuals or those with underlying chronic diseases and unvaccinated (6 cases) and incompletely vaccinated (5 cases). This aligns with the data on severe cases requiring respiratory assistance, where 45 cases were individuals who have not been vaccinated. Currently, the COVID-19 variant that is spreading in Thailand is the Omicron variant (JN.1 subtype). The symptoms of patients infected with the JN.1 variant are similar to the common cold, such as fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, and headache, with nasal discharge. It has not been observed that the severity of the disease has increased from the original Omicron variant in the past year. However, the public should not be complacent and should focus on self-prevention by wearing masks, especially in crowded places such as public transportation and hospitals. Additionally, caregivers should monitor the elderly for flu-like symptoms, and if symptoms are present, an antigen test kit (ATK) should be used for people in close contact with vulnerable groups. If the test results are positive (2 lines), wearing a mask is recommended to prevent the spread of the virus, and medical attention should be sought if symptoms are consistent with COVID-19. The World Health Organization recommends that the elderly, individuals with underlying diseases, or those with weakened immune systems should receive the COVID-19 vaccine every 6 months to 1 year to reduce the risk of severe illness and death.

DRUG-RESISTANT TUBERCULOSIS IS A PUBLIC HEALTH THREAT

The tuberculosis situation in Thailand has shown a decreasing trend, with the number of new and relapse tuberculosis cases decreasing from 87,759 in 2019 to 29,421 in 2022. The Department of Disease Control has set a goal to actively search for tuberculosis patients in communities and achieve a cure rate of at least 90%. However, the recent surveillance report from the Disease Control Department for the 3rd week of January 2024 reported a case of extensively drug-resistant tuberculosis (Pre XDR-TB) in Chonburi Province and one death in Chaiyaphum Province. Currently, the investigation is underway, and close contacts in the community are being monitored for further diagnosis and treatment.

Tuberculosis and multidrug-resistant tuberculosis remain significant infectious diseases and public health problems in Thailand, contributing significantly to chronic illness and mortality in the population. The spread of drug-resistant tuberculosis may be attributed to inappropriate treatment regimens, irregular medication adherence, or lack of medication. Factors such as the age of patients, compromised immune systems, and underlying health conditions play a role. Inadequate adherence to treatment plans and inconsistent patient care result in decreased treatment effectiveness, increased treatment duration, and higher treatment costs. This situation elevates the risk of infection spread in the community and has broader implications for the overall economy, both at the family and national levels.

Adherence to the "Guidelines for Tuberculosis Investigation and Control, 2023" is crucial for healthcare professionals involved, including providing accurate information and guidance to patients. Continuous screening for patients in various communities should follow the established investigation and control guidelines. The guidelines have been rigorously evaluated and certified to meet product standards for prevention, disease control, and public health safety by the Department of Disease Control. Strict adherence to these guidelines is of utmost importance and, if consistently followed, can effectively reduce the number of tuberculosis and drug-resistant tuberculosis cases.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OFFICIALS

The local authorities, public health officers, and relevant agencies should provide information to the community to educate tuberculosis patients and family members about the causes, early symptoms, and preventive measures to avoid drug-resistant tuberculosis. Healthcare personnel should conduct comprehensive and continuous tuberculosis case-finding in communities, along with monitoring the treatment of tuberculosis patients in the community. Emphasis should be placed on ensuring that patients receive complete and timely treatment to prevent the development of drug resistance.

Healthcare professionals are advised to search for tuberculosis patients extensively and continuously in the community. Additionally, there should be follow-up visits to stimulate regular medication adherence, complete treatment according to the treatment plan, and scheduled appointments with physicians to monitor treatment progress diligently. This is essential to prevent the spread of tuberculosis in the community. Simultaneously, educating household members about proper practices and the importance of wearing masks, especially when tuberculosis patients enter the community, remains crucial. If any member of the household or community notices abnormal symptoms related to tuberculosis, immediate notification to local public health authorities is recommended.

INFORMATION COLLECTED AND ANALYZED BY

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

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Sources

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