

**Opening Report
Of the Introductory Course on Field Epidemiology of the
International Field Epidemiology Training Program – Thailand
2007
4 June 2007**

*By Dr. Kumnuan Ungchusak
Director, Bureau of Epidemiology*

Dr. Thawat Suntrajarn

Director General, Department of Disease Control

Dr. Jayawickamarajah, WHO Representative to Thailand

Dr. Michael Malison, Country Director Thailand-US Collaboration

Dr. Sujarti Jetanasen

Dr. Prayura Kunasol

Dr. Philip Brachman and

Honorable Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the organizing committee of the International Introductory Course on Field Epidemiology year 2007, I would like to thank Dr. Thawat Suntrajarn, Director General of the Department of Disease Control, Ministry of Public Health Thailand for his kindness to chair this opening ceremony and to present certificates to graduating trainees of FETP today.

I would like to ask for your permission to give a report on the incoming trainees and the graduating trainees, and also to give brief information on the curriculum of the introductory course and the two-year training program. As incoming trainees, we welcome 2 new international trainees from Cambodia and China, and 9 trainees from Thailand, including 7 medical doctors 2 doctors of veterinary medicine.

The curriculum of the one-month introductory course on Field Epidemiology includes training in introductory epidemiology and biostatistics, program management, surveillance evaluation, outbreak investigation and coordination with laboratory programs. Although this is primary in the format of

didactic, lecture-type of training, all the subjects are also oriented to practical aspects of public health, with an emphasis on problem solving.

In the curriculum of the 2-year Field Epidemiology Training Program or so-called FETP, all trainees internationally and nationally will complete requirements which include health problem analysis, outbreak investigation and epidemiological research. Trainees' works are focused on problem-solving with emphasis on field-work. Regular seminars and tutorials allow trainees to acquire knowledge enabling them to apply epidemiological skills to important health problems. The key feature of the program is that the trainees have to work in real situations in the field under a close supervision of the staff of the program. Examples of works accomplishment this year are "An outbreak of Human Brucellosis at a Goat Farm in Thailand", "Human Infection with *Streptococcus suis* type 2 in Nakhonsawan Province", "Retrospective Cohort Study of a large Food-born Botulism Type A Outbreak in Northern Thailand 2006" and "Physical Injuries and Fatalities Resulting from Violence in the 3 southern province of Thailand".

For the incoming trainees of this year, the program officially begins today. The Introductory course on Field epidemiology is the first activity that the new FETP trainees have to attend.

The Ministry of Public Health of the Royal Thai Government in collaboration with the World Health Organization and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has developed this international program in response to the increasing demands of many countries in the region for well-trained epidemiologists. The training course will last for 4 weeks starting from today.

Upon completion of the course, the participants will be able to:

First, describe the key principles of epidemiologic surveillance and outbreak investigations.

Second, analyze and interpret surveillance data and data from outbreak investigations.

Third, get to know colleagues who work in the same field of interest in your own and other countries, sharing experiences so that surveillance activities and outbreak investigation capacity can be strengthened throughout the region.

Totally, this course includes participation by 40 public health professionals whose duties are directly involved with disease prevention and control. There are 22 participants from Asian countries including Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, India, Timor Leste, China (Yunnan).

It is important to mention that the participants will benefit from this training course with the full cooperation from many organizations. Course lecturers have been invited from the Ministry of Public Health Thailand, the World Health Organization, Mahidol University, Chulalongkorn University, Prince Songkhlanakarin University, Phramongkutklao College of Medicine, Siriraj Hospital, Thailand-US Collaboration (TUC) and Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

May I now request, Dr. Thawat Suntrajarn, the Director General of the Department of Disease Control to give the opening address, please...

Opening Remarks
Of the International Introductory Course on Field Epidemiology, 2007
4 June 2007

By Dr. Thawat Suntrajarn, Director General, Department of Disease Control

Dr. Jayawickamarajah, WHO Representative to Thailand

Dr. Michael Malison, Country Director Thailand-US Collaboration

Dr. Sujarti Jetanasen

Dr. Prayura Kunasol

Dr. Philip Brachman

Honorable Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my great pleasure to be here today in the opening ceremony of the 2007 International Introductory Course on Field Epidemiology and to participate in the certificate presentation for the graduates of the 26th FETP class.

The International Field Epidemiology Training Program is a program of the highest priority of the Thai Ministry of Public Health. Today, Avian Influenza, Enterovirus 71, Dengue Hemorrhagic Fever, HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and other emerging infectious diseases threaten the well-being and livelihood of people in Asia. Also, many other unwelcome non-infectious diseases are joining these troublemakers. The International Field Epidemiology Training Program is an effective and practical way for public health personnel worldwide to collaborate and defend the health of people in this region.

We have seen the emergence of new disease challenges for national and international public health in the past decade. New and re-emerging epidemic risks have been compounded by concerns about potential

dissemination of chemical or radioactive substances which also jeopardize international health security. Within this evolving scenario, the International Health Regulations 2005 so called “IHR 2005” is a key milestone in public health. The IHR 2005 are the world's first legally binding agreement in the fight against public health emergencies of international concern. Public health personnel and health authorities around the world work closely to implement the IHR 2005 through the public health network of all nations. Field epidemiologists also play an important role in the implementation of the IHR 2005.

At this time, I would like to pause for a moment and remind today’s graduates, our FETP alumni, guests, and the incoming trainees what is most unique and important about the Field Epidemiology Training Program. I’d like to remind you what makes FETP different from academic work, clinical training or other training. Field epidemiology is the perfect combination of intellectual tools and practical skills applied to improve and protect the health of communities. You must focus your work according to this principle and your mentors will evaluate you by these criteria. It is not enough to develop intellectually beautiful work without practical benefit to a community. It is not sufficient to work hard at promoting health in a community without learning and using epidemiological principles. To do so, it would be the same as a carpenter using dull tools or using an axe in a task best suited for a chisel. Field epidemiology training teaches practical problem solving. Perhaps the best way to measure the outcome of our work is to ask the communities served: is your health problem solved? If not, is it improved? This question should guide your work.

Distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,

From the report delivered by Dr. Kumnuan Ungchusak, the Director of the Bureau of Epidemiology, I note with much appreciation that this course is well organized by the FETP Thailand with collaborations from the World Health Organization and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The Department of Disease Control of the Ministry of Public Health strongly supports the cooperation for development of sustainable measures in combating communicable diseases, major burdens in terms of human mortality and morbidity. This course provides important and immediate opportunities for progress. For some time, we have recognized that disease surveillance is the one of the most important public health tools for efficient prevention and control of disease. Surveillance helps health authorities to efficiently target programs to known at risk populations, to identify geographic areas with highest rates of disease, and to provide early detection of some health problems. Skills and knowledge in epidemiology, along with practical experience, are essential for public health professionals to effectively deal with health problems. The science of epidemiology allows us to identify the important issues, analyzing their magnitude and characteristics, design strategies and interventions to solve the problems, implement interventions and finally to evaluate the impact and changes of interventions.

I am confident that this workshop will not only increase your knowledge in field epidemiology. It is only in working actively and closely together can we succeed in disease control, and promote socio-economic

development in our region and ultimately ensure security for our peoples. I hope that the outcome of this workshop can strengthen our surveillance and response capacity, establish a network or an early warning system including information sharing among ASEAN+3 member countries.

This course has been developed in order to meet requirements of public health work and to provide all participants with new knowledge, useful experience and information which can be applied to field circumstances.

I am confident that throughout the course, the sharing of opinions and experiences, and personal interaction with good working relations among all participants will result in fruitful cooperation in this region.

On behalf of the Department of Disease Control, Ministry of Public Health, I would like to take this opportunity to thank WHO, CDC and all parties for their kind contribution for Introductory Course of the International Field Epidemiology Training Program – Thailand 2007.