



Dean & team visited UK during 25 September - 1 October 2014 When Collaboration Does Matter



★ With Prof Janet Hemingway, Director of Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine



★ With Prof Andrew Hamilton, Vice-Chancellor, University of Oxford



★ With Prof. Christopher Conlon, Christian Nsanzabana, Prof. Nick Day, and Prof. Nick White



★ With Prof Jeremy Farrar, Director of the Wellcome Trust



★ With Prof Gavin Sreaton, Vice Dean (Academic Development), Chair of Medicine, Imperial College



★ Benchmarking on Education and Research at Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, UK, 26 September 2014

Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine Team

Prof. Janet Hemingway, Director
 Prof. Steve Ward, Deputy Director
 Prof. Alister Craig, Dean of Biological Sciences
 Prof. David Lalloo, Dean of Clinical Sciences and International Public Health
 Dr. Sue Assinder, Director of Education

Faculty of Tropical Medicine, Mahidol University Team

Prof. Yaowalark Sukthana, Dean
 Prof. Sasithon Pukritayakamee, Deputy Dean for Education
 Assoc. Prof. Emsri Pongponratn, Deputy Dean for International Affairs
 Assoc. Prof. Jaranit Kaewkungwal, Director, BIOPHICS
 Mrs. Pornpimon Adams, Assistant to the Dean for Research



★ Meeting with Prof. Andrew Hamilton (Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford), Prof. Nick Day, Prof. Nick White and Ed Nash (International Strategy Officer)



★ Visiting Centre for Tropical Medicine, Nuffield Department of Medicine, University of Oxford, UK, Meeting with Prof. Christopher Conlon, Christian Nsanzabana, Prof. Nick Day, and Prof. Nick White, 29 September 2014



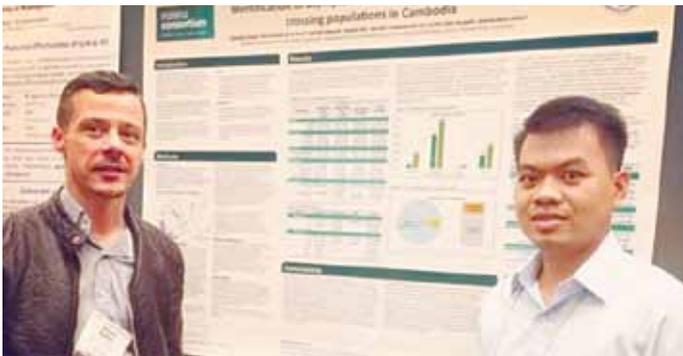
★ At Wellcome Trust on 30 September 2014, meeting with Prof. Jeremy Farrar and his team; Michael Chew, Simon Kay, Kevin Moses, Mike Turner and Jimmy Whitworth



★ Meeting with Prof. Gavin Sreaton at Imperial College, UK, 30 September 2014

Malaria Consortium at the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene meeting in New Orleans

In November Malaria Consortium gave a number of presentations at the 63rd annual American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene meeting in New Orleans. Malaria Consortium discussed a number of topics at the conference, including pneumonia diagnostics, asymptomatic malaria and maintaining usage of long lasting insecticidal nets (LLINs) and prevention and diagnostic tools.



To download the presentation and learn more about Malaria Consortium's activity at the ASTMH, visit: <http://bit.ly/1G2krkT>

Malaria Consortium raising awareness of pneumonia

As a member of the Global Coalition against Child Pneumonia, Malaria Consortium and its partners organised several events worldwide on November 12th - the sixth annual World Pneumonia Day. Pneumonia is the biggest infectious killer of children under the age of five, and Malaria Consortium worked with partners to underline the need for strengthened commitment to reach every child in high burden countries.



To read more about Malaria Consortium's activities, visit: <http://bit.ly/1zLSSuz>

Malaria Consortium attended JITMM & FBPZ8

From 2nd-4th December, Malaria Consortium attended both the Joint International Tropical Medicine Meeting (JITMM 2014) and the eighth Seminar on Food and Water-borne Parasitic Zoonoses (FBPZ8) in Bangkok. During the meetings, Malaria Consortium gave a presentation and displayed four posters. Two of the posters, which focused on consumer preferences and barriers to the usage of long lasting insecticidal nets,

and on malaria in mobile populations in Thailand respectively, were awarded prizes.

To read more about the event and download the presentations, visit: <http://bit.ly/1w59c9c>



Publications:

Novel approaches to risk stratification to support malaria elimination: an example from Cambodia

Accurate malaria stratification is essential for effective targeting of interventions but represents a particular challenge in pre-elimination settings. In these settings, transmission is typically sufficiently low and spatially heterogeneous to warrant a need for estimates of malaria risk at sub-district or village level, but is also likely to be sufficiently high to render the type of decision support systems appropriate to the final stages of malaria elimination impractical. In such a scenario it is arguably more feasible to strengthen existing passive malaria surveillance systems so that routinely generated case data can provide an effective basis for stratifying malaria risk. This paper explores the utility of routine malaria surveillance data for the stratification of malaria risk in Cambodia, where the target is malaria elimination by 2025.

To learn more, please visit: <http://bit.ly/1qonNtL>

Improved tools for the measurement of respiratory rate and oxygen saturation for the detection of signs of pneumonia

Currently, community health workers use a number of devices to diagnose the symptoms of pneumonia in children under five years of age. These range from mobile phone applications, manual respiratory rate timers to coloured counting beads. This project aims to identify the most accurate, acceptable, scalable and user-friendly respiratory rate timers and pulse oximeters for the detection of pneumonia symptoms in children by community health workers and frontline health facility workers in four low-income countries which are Cambodia, Uganda, Ethiopia and South Sudan. The recent result of the formative research, stage 1 of the project has been included in our project brief.

To learn more, visit: <http://bit.ly/1pYSXHw>



Students of Rakuno Gakuen University visited MOCID

9 October 2014, we had a chance to welcome Ms. Michiha Kon and Mr. Youhei Kobayashi from the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Rakuno Gakuen University, Hokkaido, Japan to our lab for surveillance of Hepatitis E virus in Thailand. It shows a good opportunity of Thailand and Japan collaboration.



Dr. Chang-Kweng Lim visited MOCID and joined JITMM 2014



International Congress on Medical Virology (ICMV 2014)



“Viral Diseases without Borders” in Bangkok, 5-7 November 2014

Ms. Nantarat Chantawat presented “Prevalence of antibodies against chikungunya virus in endemic and non-endemic areas, post-outbreak 2008-2010 in Thailand.”

Dr. Tamaki Okabayashi presented “Development and clinical evaluation of a new rapid immunochromatographic diagnostic test lit to detect chikungunya virus antigen.”

Dr. Chang-Kweng Lim, Department of Virology, National Institute of Infectious Diseases, Japan, had visited our lab during 1-4 December 2014 and also joined the Joint International Tropical Medicine Meeting 2014 as an invited speaker.

For JITMM 2014, Dr. Okabayashi organized a symposium “Studies on immune response to mosquito borne viruses.” For his invited speaker Dr. Chang-Kweng Lim, Department of Virology, National Institute of Infectious Diseases, Japan, came up with the topic of “Pathogenesis of epidemic chikungunya virus in the common marmoset”, Dr. Meng Ling Moi, Department of Virology, National Institute of Infectious Diseases, Japan, on the topic of “Neutralizing antibody titers as a surrogate for protection against dengue: a revisit of neutralizing antibody titers of dengue patients using Fcγ receptor expressing cells” and Dr. Atsushi Yamanaka, BIKEN Endowed Department of Dengue Vaccine Development, Faculty of Tropical Medicine, Mahidol University on the topic of “Dengue virus infection-neutralizing and enhancing antibody responses in central Thai-populations against Indonesian and Thai strains.”



Left (of the picture): Dr. Meng Ling Moi
Middle: Dr. Chang-Kweng Lim
Right: Dr. Atsushi Yamanaka

New Year Party

16 December 2014, CEAR, MOCID and BIKEN held a New Year party. We had activities such as singing and doing the lucky draw.

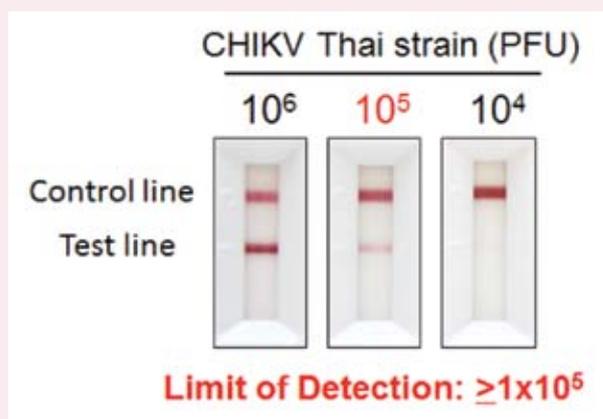


New Publication

Detection of chikungunya virus antigen by a novel rapid immunochromatographic test.

Okabayashi T*, Sasaki S, Masrinoul P, Chantawat N, Yoksan S, Nitatpattana N, Chusri S, Morales Vargas R, Grandadam M, Brey P, Soegijanto S, Mulyantno K, Churrotin S, Kotaki T, Faye O, Faye O, Sow A, Sall AA, Puiprom O, Chaichana P, Kurosu T, Kato S, Kosaka M, Ramasoota P, Ikuta K. 2014. *J. Clin. Microbiol.*, Nov. 19, (Epub).

Chikungunya fever is a mosquito-borne disease of key public health importance in tropical and subtropical countries. Although severe joint pain is the most distinguishing feature of chikungunya fever, diagnosis remains difficult because the symptoms of chikungunya fever are shared by many pathogens including dengue fever. The present study aimed to develop a new immunochromatographic diagnosis test for detection of chikungunya virus antigen in serum. Mice were immunized with Thai chikungunya fever -patient isolates, East Central South African genotype, to produce mouse monoclonal antibodies against chikungunya virus. Using these monoclonal antibodies, a new diagnostic test was developed and evaluated for the detection of chikungunya virus. The newly developed diagnosis test reacted with not only East Central South African genotype but also Asian and West African genotypes of chikungunya virus. Testing of sera from chikungunya fever -suspected patients in Thailand (n=50), Laos (n=54), Indonesia (n=2), Senegal (n=6) revealed sensitivity, specificity, and RT-PCR agreement values of 89.4%, 94.4%, and 91.1%, respectively. In our study using serial samples, a new diagnostic test showed high agreement with the RT-PCR within the first 5 days after onset. A rapid diagnostic test was developed using mouse monoclonal antibodies that react with chikungunya virus envelope proteins. The diagnostic accuracy of our diagnostic test is clinically acceptable for chikungunya fever diagnosis in the acute phase.



BIKEN Endowed Department of Dengue Vaccine Development



Visit by Ms.Siti Churrotin, Airlangga University, Indonesia

Ms. Siti Churrotin
Dengue Laboratorium
Institution of Tropical Disease
Airlangga University



During the 24th of November through the 5th of December 2014, BIKEN Endowed Department of Dengue Vaccine Development received a visit of Ms.Siti Churrotin who is a research worker at Dengue Laboratorium of the Institute of Tropical Disease, Airlangga University, Indonesia. She was invited as a part of our collaboration with Indonesian researchers for the INiTha project. As we wrote in a previous issue of the Inter News, INiTha is the Indonesia-Japan-Thailand research collaboration on infectious diseases under the framework of “Japan Initiative for Global Research Network on Infectious Diseases (J-GRID).”

In this visit, Ms. Siti obtained a financial support from Indonesia State Ministry of Research and Technology. Because she is interested in dengue studies, she decided to select our Department at Faculty of Tropical Medicine for her foreign research works. Her study subject is “Dengue virus infection-enhancing and neutralizing activity balance in populations of Indonesia and Thailand.” This is one of the INiTha research subjects and her purpose here was to learn some cutting-edge techniques useful for her future works. Despite the short period, she enjoyed to stay with us and felt that this is a really wonderful opportunity for her career development.



Welcome party for Ms.Siti and the great Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC)

JITMM 2014



The Joint International Tropical Medicine Meeting (JITMM) was held from the 2nd of December through the 4th of December.

Dr. Tamaki Okabayashi, Mahidol-Osaka Center for Infectious Diseases (MOCID) organized two sessions, of which Dr. Eiji Konishi chaired one session with Dr. Pannamthip Pitaksajakul, Center of Excellence for Antibody Research (CEAR). This session was titled “Studies on Immune Response to Mosquito- borne Viruses.”

Three speakers were invited in this session. The first speaker was Dr. Chang-Kweng Lim, Department of Virology, National Institute of Infectious Diseases, Japan. He talked on “Pathogenesis of epidemic Chikungunya Virus in the common marmoset.” The second was Dr. Meng Ling Moi, Department of Virology, National Institute of Infectious Diseases, Japan, who visited us last year and was taken up by a previous issue. Her topic was “Neutralizing antibody titers as a surrogate for protection against dengue: a revisit of neutralizing antibody titers of dengue patients using Fcγ receptor expressing cells.” The third speaker was Dr. Atsushi Yamanaka of our Department and the title of his talk was “Dengue virus infection-neutralizing and enhancing antibody responses in central Thai populations against Indonesian and Thai strains.” All speakers are prominent young researchers in the field of arboviruses and hope to be next generation leaders of the academic society.



New Year 2015 Party with CEAR and MOCID



It is time to start a New Year 2015 Party and get the present (lucky draw). We had a special event on the 16th of December 2014 in the Kanjika Devakul Conference room located on the 5th floor of the Chalermprakiat Building. Most students and staffs of CEAR, MOCID and BIKEN attended with sportswear in the room decorated with beautiful interiors prepared by CEAR's members.

We enjoyed talking to each other and singing songs using a PC with Karaoke software for 3 hours. In particular, we had a fantastic performance by Drs. Pongrama (electronic guitar), Konishi (acoustic guitar) and Yamanaka (violin) which cannot be missed for celebrating New Year 2015 Party.



Down in the bayou: MORU at ASTMH

Last week, over 20 colleagues from MORU, SMRU, LOWMRU and associated units attended the 63rd Annual General Meeting of the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (ASTMH). Held 2-6 Nov in New Orleans in the heart of the Big Easy, the ASTMH meetings included a keynote address by Bill Gates.

MORU and its sister units were well represented in ASTMH meetings, deliberations, posters and activities. These included – with apologies to anyone we missed! -- panels on malaria and resistance in Cambodia and South-East Asia with Nick White and Francois Nosten; Charlie Woodrow on defining the leading edge of malaria resistance in Myanmar; Paul Newton's thoughtful call for action on falsified medicines and drugs; Stiej and Arjen discussing acidosis in severe malaria; infant feeding practices among Karen migrants and refugees; valid consent in adolescents; Richard Maude talking about retinal changes in visceral Leishmaniasis; Rapeephan on amoebic liver abscesses; Cindy Chu on single dose primaquine for targeted malaria elimination; and detecting artemisinin resistance using the K13 marker.

In addition, LOMWRU's Sabine Dittrich presented on 'Speedier leptospira diagnosis using hemoculture fluids' while Caoimhe Nic Fhogartaigh talked about 'Diagnostic approaches for rapid diagnosis of acute Leptospirosis'.



MORU steps out at JITMM Bangkok



Run by the Faculty of Tropical Medicine, Mahidol University, the Joint International Tropical Medicine Meeting (JITMM 2014) and the 8th Seminar on Food- and Water-borne Parasitic Zoonoses (FBPZ8) were held 2-4 December in Bangkok. The two conferences provided researchers with a unique opportunity to network and learn from global experts about malaria, dengue, neglected tropical diseases, parasites and other infectious diseases. Subjects ranged from epidemiology, diagnosis and treatment to discussions on travel medicine, school health and bioinformatics.

Starting with MORU Director Nick Day who spoke at the opening ceremony, and Nick White, SEA Chairman, MORU folks were quite active among the many participants at JITMM 2014.

With apologies from anyone we missed out, we noted these colleagues at JITMM 2014: MAEMOD's Wirichada (Pan) Pan-ngum, Senior Mathematical Modeler with her poster, Is leptospirosis an occupational disease in Thailand?; Microbiology Research Physician Wirongrong (Kae) Chierakul and Danny Paris, Microbiology Senior Researcher, shown chairing a session, Highlights of bacterial infections and their epidemiology; Thomas Pouplin, MORU Pharmacology Research Scientist, talked about the pharmacokinetics of TB drugs in children with tuberculosis meningitis; MORU's Head of Microbiology Dr. Direk Limmathurotsakul spoke on The global distribution and burden of melioidosis; Dr. Janjira Thaipadungpanit, Head of Molecular Microbiology, gave a talk on Staph argentus infections; and Gareth Turner, Head of Pathology.

Artemisinin resistance featured on NBC (USA)

In late November, the USA major network NBC feature, Drug-Resistant Malaria Is 'Disaster in the Making', drew major attention to the growing public health posed by the spread of artemisinin-resistant malaria from Cambodia and across the Thai-Myanmar towards India and Africa, where it could affect millions. This powerful piece featured SMRU's Prof Francois Nosten and MORU's Prof Nick White.



Wellcome Trust visits SMRU



On 18 October, Francois Nosten's Shoklo Medical Research Unit (SMRU) team hosted a distinguished group from the Wellcome Trust including Kevin Moses, WT Director of Science, Executive Projects Manager Ellie Estchild, Mike Turner, Head of Infection and Immuno-biology, and Michael Chew, Science Portfolio Adviser.

The Wellcome Trust team met with SMRU local and expat staff including Dr. Clare Ling, Dr. Germana Bancone, Dr. Verena Cararra, Dr. Aung Pyae Phy, Dr. Sein Sein Thi, Dr. Lei Lei Swe, Dr. Cindy Chu and Gilles Delmas. The team also met SMRU staff doing development testing and visited SMRU micro and haematology labs, the SMRU Wang Pha clinic and Wang Pha TB facility where they met kids who live with their families at the TB house and attend school, often in 40C heat. After that, they then headed back to SMRU offices in Mae Sot.

The visitors seemed most impressed with how good cold water tasted after having a TB Mask on, SMRU's access to clinics in remote areas, and the school at the TB clinic village.

Photos above show, clockwise from top left: Dr. Lei Lei Swe, the head of the TB department at SMRU's Wang Pha TB village, and Mike Turner; Nick White and Mike Turner considering a swim in Moei River at SMRU's Wang Pha Clinic; children at school in the Wang Pha TB clinic village; and Mike Turner, Michael Chew and Nick White at the Moei River market.

WT joins LOMWRU Board Round Discussion



Wellcome Trust visitors to LOMWRU in Vientiane, Lao PDR, were able to join the 17 October morning board round at the Microbiology Laboratory in Mahosot Hospital. From left, Dr. David Dance, Dr. Anousone Duangnouvong, Dr. Andrew Taylor, Dr. Sayaphet Rattanavong, the Wellcome Trust's Dr. Michael Chew and Prof. Mike Turner, and Dr. Ladamone Keoviengkhone.

Gates Foundation visits SMRU TME site



On 6-7 December, Bruno Moonen and David Brandling-Bennett from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation visited some of SMRU's Targeted Malaria Elimination (TME) sites.

On Saturday they went to Htee Kaw Taw, one of the four Thai TME study villages and met there with villagers and their leaders during a meeting in preparation of the 18th month survey. David explained the importance of malaria elimination and thanked the villagers for their participation in the project.

On Sunday the guests visited SMRU offices and laboratories where they were welcomed by the heads of departments, with each department making a presentation on current projects and past achievements. The two-hour meeting provided Bruno and David opportunities to discuss TME with the researchers. This was followed by a buffet and a series of songs by Khun Sompet and Saw Dyan, seen practicing top right.

Australia and Afghanistan colleagues join IMPROV meetings



In mid-October, the IMPROV (Improving the Radical Cure of Vivax Malaria) Trial Management Group met in MORU, this time, with colleagues Ric Price and Kamala in from Darwin, Australia, and Dr. Awab, the PI for Afghanistan, joining in live rather on Skype, as they normally do. IMPROV project manager Bob Taylor said it was a real plus having Ric, Kamala and Awab present to give up-to-date field reports, and giving the group an opportunity to have good discussions on a range of issues.

Largely funded by the Medical Research Council (UK), IMPROV is a joint project between MORU and Menzies University (Australia).

IMPROV is a multi-center randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled non-inferiority trial in G6PD normal patients with uncomplicated vivax malaria. It will be conducted in five study sites located in Indonesia, Vietnam, Pakistan and Afghanistan. IMPROV's aim is to determine whether a 7-day primaquine regimen is safe and not inferior to the standard 14-day regimen.

Awab summarised news and challenges from his site in Jalalabd, Afghanistan. Things have picked up there since Ramadan ended, Awab noted, with 103 cases screened, and 37 recruited into the study.

The number of tablets is an issue in Afghanistan, as many patients are not keen on taking so many tablets at one time, causing a negative impact on recruitment. The G6PD testing is going well despite an initial misunderstanding as to when photographs of the spot test should be taken. The updated SOP now stresses that these must be taken very soon after the test otherwise the filter paper loses its colour and the result appears negative. The Trial Management Group was content that things were going quite well in Afghanistan and thanked Awab for his hard work.

François Nosten wins science diplomacy award

In mid-November, in recognition of his 35 years of work fighting malaria in the conflict zones of the Thai-Myanmar border and for bringing around the same table Karen and Burmese representatives to discuss malaria elimination, François Nosten, director of the Shoklo Malaria Research Unit (SMRU), was awarded the 2014 TWAS Regional Prize for Science Diplomacy. The award comes with a U\$3,000 cheque that will go towards SMRU finances.

The Academy of Sciences for the Developing World (TWAS) is an autonomous international organization that promotes scientific capacity and excellence in scientific research. Founded as the Third World Academy of Sciences by a group of eminent scientists under the leadership of the late Nobel Laureate Abdus Salam of Pakistan in 1983, TWAS was officially launched in Trieste, Italy, in 1985, by the Secretary General of the United Nations. TWAS funding and staff are administered by UNESCO. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Italy provides a major portion of TWAS funds.

IMPROV trains Indonesia staff

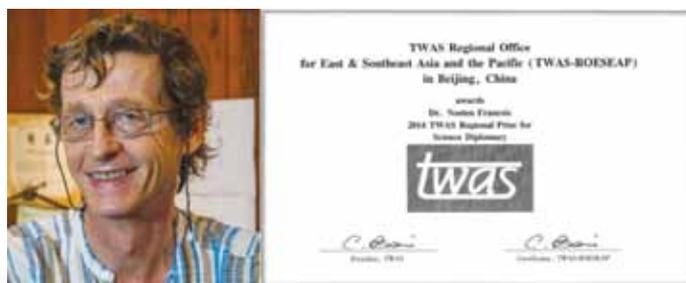


October's been a busy month for IMPROV, with Bob Taylor, Prayoon Yuentrakul and Naw Htee Khu training 30 key staff from Indonesia's Eijkman-Oxford Clinical Research Unit (EOCRU) and the two North and South Sumatra IMPROV sites. Held in Jakarta, this was followed on 17 October with Good Clinical Practice training by Prayoon. The Sumatra teams will now prepare their sites and wait for their drug import permit. Shown in photo above to the left of Htee Khu (centre, 2nd row) are Ayodhia (in red), the PI for the north Sumatra site, and Prof. Inge Sutanto, the south Sumatra PI. Behind Prof. Inge is Kevin Baird, director of EOCRU.

Nick White at FTM



On 17 October, Nick White, Chairman, SEA, of the Mahidol-Oxford Tropical Medicine Research Unit (MORU) gave the FTM Special Research Talk at the Faculty of Tropical Medicine (FTM) Mahidol University. Titled Are males more sensitive than females? The well attended talk was held on the 5th Floor of Mahidol's Chalermprakiat Building.



On the road with Gareth



In early October, MORU Head of Pathology Gareth Turner spoke at and helped chair several sessions at the International Academy of Pathology (IAP) World Congress in Bangkok. These included sessions on Malaria Pathology, Novel Diagnostic techniques in Infectious Diseases Pathology, and a series of talks on Developing Laboratory Medicine in Low Resource Countries.

Gareth then went to Myanmar with a delegation from the Royal College of Pathologists, UK, WASPaLM and the Canadian Association of Pathology (CAP-ACP) to meet the Minister of Health in Myanmar to discuss helping to develop Laboratory Diagnostic services in Myanmar (photo above).

How maths help fight infectious diseases



The work of MORU's Mathematical and Economic Modelling Department (MAEMOD) was recently featured in a piece on SciDevNet titled, Using maths to find the best weapon against malaria.

In the four-min piece, Lisa White, the head of MAEMOD, explains how the MAEMOD team scientists develop mathematical models to show how drug-resistant malaria is transmitted and test how it might be controlled or even eliminated. MORU Health Economist Yoel Lubell discusses how these models can also evaluate the potential costs and benefits of diagnostics, treatment and control strategies for other infectious diseases.

Myanmar malaria study training



In mid-December, Phaikeyong Cheah, Lorenz von Seidlein, Jem Chalk and other Bangkok colleagues drove six hours up to the Three Pagodas Pass on Thai-Myanmar border to conduct training on submicroscopic malaria with Frank Smithuis and MOCRU colleagues from Hpaya Thon Su in Myanmar.

NDM Graduate Research Prize winner

We're pleased to announce that Richard Maude, senior clinical research fellow at MORU and honorary consultant physician in Oxford, recently won this year's NDM Graduate Research Prize competition for his Oxford DPhil work, Modelling malaria elimination in the context of antimalarial drug resistance. Richard's supervisors were Lisa White, Arjen Dondorp and Nick Day.



Currently working in both malaria and mathematical modelling at MORU Bangkok, Richard started at MORU in 2007 as a research physician.

As part of this work, Richard conducted clinical and epidemiological studies on malaria incidence and artemisinin resistance in South and South-East Asia and developed population level mathematical models of malaria treatment, antimalarial drug resistance and malaria elimination in Cambodia and Bangladesh. These models helped guide policy decisions for strategies to tackle artemisinin resistance and for malaria elimination. In parallel, Richard was principal and co-investigator for a series of clinical studies on the pathogenesis and treatment of severe malaria in Bangladesh and India.

You can view profiles of Richard and past winners at <http://www.ndm.ox.ac.uk/student-profiles>.

Buddy system kicks off



More than 60 people crammed into the Similan room in Bangkok on Thursday 2 October for the launch of MORU's Buddy Scheme. Based on a suggestion that came up during Microbiology's retreat in early September, the Buddy Scheme pairs up 2-3 Thai staff members with a non-Thai English-speaking colleague for language training and cultural exchange.

Much laughter was had as the groups worked through some activities including talking in English about what they would take to a desert island and their favourite movie, and then training their foreigner to do better in Thai when hailing a taxi.

Each group nominated a coordinator and made a plan for their first meet up for coffee, lunch or just to chat. The groups will meet at least once a month with most resolving to meet more often. All groups will get together again in three months to see how everyone is getting on, swap tips and then re-shuffle the groups. If you want to join the next round, please email Sharanjeet@tropmedres.ac or Ampai@tropmedres.ac. Special thanks go out to Sharan and Kat for all their work on the scheme.

COMRU examines traditional Khmer birth rituals



COMRU nurse research assistant Kimsan Suon (left), Abbot So Vong, COMRU IT assistant Roya Kang, and Sreymom Pol, COMRU research assistant.

On 20 November the Cambodia Oxford Medical Research Unit (COMRU) clinical research team travelled to Battambang to meet a famous Kru Khmer (traditional healer) monk. The meeting was part of the newborn health ethics and beliefs study that COMRU is conducting. The meeting lasted about one hour and Abbot So Vong was able to explain the significance of various rituals conducted around the time of birth.

The meeting was part of the qualitative study, Health ethics, perception, beliefs and practices at the time of delivery and in the neonatal period in rural Cambodia, funded by the ETHOX Centre, Oxford. Claudia Turner received one of their Global Health Bioethics Network Bursaries this year. Data collection involves interviews with mothers (both with babies in hospital and in the community) and focus group discussions with different members of the community about practices around the time of delivery.

The study aims to record the beliefs and interpretations of illness and death in neonates (infants <four weeks of age) that are held by a cross section of the community in rural Cambodia. The long term aim is to inform future studies on community engagement to reduce neonatal morbidity and mortality.

Thai Gov't officials visit MORU Bangkok Micro labs



On 2 October, officials from the Office of Disease Prevention and Control 4 in Ratchaburi paid a visit to the BSL2 and BSL3 Microbiology labs at MORU Bangkok.

Organised by MORU Departmental Safety Officer Stuart Blacksell, Senior Microbiologist Vanaporn (P'Lek) Wuthiekanun, Lab Manager Premjit (Kung) Amornchai and Biosafety Administrator Soiratchaneekorn (Tarn) Ruanchaiman, the visit gave our guests a chance to observe and get guidance on how to build, manage and maintain BSL2 and BSL3 labs.

Hospital epidemiology training in Phuket



About 80 people from 20 countries attended the ESCMID-SHEA Training Course in Hospital Epidemiology held 20-23 October in Phuket. Attendees included MORU staff from Bangkok, Ubon Ratchathani and COMRU, and colleagues from Viet Nam's OUCRU, while MORU's Ben Cooper (centre) was among the faculty. Two modules were taught during the session: Healthcare-associated Infection Prevention and Management and Applied Infection Control.

Oh rocks Café Scientifique



MORU's Viriya (Oh) Hantrakun, 2nd from right, and colleagues this past June after testing a Bangkok-area field for melioidosis.

On 29 October at Bangkok's Cafe Tartine, MORU's Viriya (Oh) Hantrakun gave a well-attended talk to BkkSci's Café Scientifique titled Melioidosis: The Worst Disease You've Never Heard Of.

Oh explained why folks should worry about melioidosis, a little-known disease, and discussed its worldwide distribution, causes and risk factors, routes of infection, baseline health conditions, what it feels like if you have it, protection against it and treatment.

Recognized as a bio threat disease after Ebola and anthrax by the US CDC and US Army, melioidosis is a serious infection caused by the soil and water based bacterium *Burkholderia pseudomallei*. It is found in melioidosis-endemic regions of South-East Asia, the Indian subcontinent, northern Australia, parts of South America, and African countries including Niger, Gambia, Kenya and Uganda. There is currently no promising vaccine candidate for melioidosis on the horizon.

Thailand has more cases than any other country, with over 2,000 melioidosis infections a year – of which 40% are fatal. Ubon Ratchathani province alone sees nearly 500 melioidosis cases a year. Patients who survive acute infection need to take oral antibiotics for 20 weeks to eradicate the bacteria and prevent relapse.

Welcome, new colleagues!



Naomi Waithira

Head of Data Management
Clinical Trials Support Group (CTSG)

A native of Kenya, Naomi has a background in computer science and experience in data management and governance in medical research and health systems. Prior to MORU, Naomi worked at KEMRI-Wellcome Trust in Kilifi in data management across various epidemiological studies and multi-centre clinical trials and later as the Head of Data Governance. Naomi has previously served as a data systems manager for USAID health systems projects and has led curriculum development and initiation of a Master's degree track in research data management at University of Witswatersrand. She is passionate about capacity development for data management particularly in low and middle income countries.



Nicola James

Project & Data Coordinator for TME,
Malaria

Nicola joins MORU to assist the TME team with data management, coordination and administrative tasks. For the past two years, Nicola has worked for the International Organization for Migration (IOM), in Bangkok and then in Mae Sot, where she worked closely with the USA Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and coordinated studies to evaluate the public health needs of Burmese refugees waiting to resettle to the U.S. Nicola also has experience implementing public health projects in India, Nepal and Tanzania and holds an MSc in Control of Infectious Diseases from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.



WorldWide Antimalarial Resistance Network (WWARN) Asia Regional CENTRE @TropMed



Jeffery Smith, Director of WWARN-Asia Regional Centre participated in the Joint International Tropical Medicine Meeting (JITMM 2014) and the 8th Seminar on Food- and Water-borne Parasitic Zoonoses (FBPZ8) with the theme “3D perspectives on Tropical Medicine: Drivers, Diversity and Determination”, Bangkok, Thailand, 2-4 December 2014



Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metric (SEA-PLM) Launch



★ SEAMEO and the UNICEF Regional Office for East Asia and the Pacific (EAPRO) launched a collaborative regional project called Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metric (SEA-PLM) that aims to introduce a targeted learning assessment tool for SEAMEO in a ceremony on 20 October 2014 at the Amari Watgate Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand.

The launch was attended by the ministers of education and high officials from six SEAMEO Member Countries, including Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand who all expressed enthusiasm about the project. Dr. Witaya Jeradechakul, Director of the SEAMEO Secretariat and Dr. Isiyi Ndombi, Deputy Regional Director of UNICEF EAPRO, chaired the SEA-PLM Launching Ceremony.

The project is coordinated by the SEAMEO Secretariat and UNICEF EAPRO which are both based in Bangkok, Thailand. Various SEAMEO Centres are involved in the development of the SEA-PLM and work with national teams at respective SEAMEO Member Countries. UNESCO Bangkok takes part in the project as a partner.

SEAMEO Congress: Southeast Asia in Transition



★ With six ministers and vice ministers leading, the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) organized the SEAMEO Congress – a landmark gathering of nearly 500 participants from 20 countries representing a range of stakeholders including governments, non-governmental organizations, industry, academe, students and other groups on 21-22 October 2014 at the Amari Watgate Hotel in Bangkok, Thailand that aimed primarily at drawing out practical education and human resource development policies and practices to bridge skills gap in Southeast Asia and promote sustained growth in the region. SEAMEO Centres' officials participated as Plenary Speakers and Moderators.

Regional Consultative Meeting, SEA-BES and SEA- PLM, Penang, Malaysia



★ The SEAMEO Secretariat and SEAMEO RECSAM, with support from the UNICEF East Asia and the Pacific Regional Office (EAPRO), conducted the Regional Consultative Meetings on the SEAMEO Basic Education Standards (SEA BES) and the Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA PLM) on 4-5 November 2014 at the SEAMEO RECSAM in Penang, Malaysia. Various SEAMEO Centres' officials participated in this workshop.



SEAMEO High Officials Meeting, 2014

★ The 37th SEAMEO High Officials Meeting was held 26-27 November 2014 at the Grand Hall, Plaza Athenee Bangkok, A Royal Meridian Hotel, Bangkok Thailand with SEAMEO Member Countries, SEAMEO Associate and Affiliate Members, SEAMEO Centres/Network Officials, SEAMEO Secretariat and SEAMEO Partners in attendance.

SEAMEO- Tsukuba University Follow –Up Meeting



★ The University of Tsukuba and SEAMEO convened a one day planning meeting to identify specific collaborative activities and plan for implementation in 2015 in the inter related fields of food, health, and environment on 24 November 2014 in Bangkok, Thailand.

Five experts from the faculties of Life and Environmental Science, Agriculture and Medicine of the University of Tsukuba participated in the one-day meeting.

SEAMEO was represented by its four SEAMEO Centres, namely, SEAMEO Regional Centre for Tropical Biology (BIOTROP), SEAMEO Regional Centre for Food and Nutrition (RECFON), SEAMEO Regional Centre for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA), and SEAMEO Regional Tropical Medicine and Public Health Network (TROPMED).

The Center for Research on International Cooperation in Educational Development (CRICED) of the University of Tsukuba and the SEAMEO Secretariat chaired the meeting.

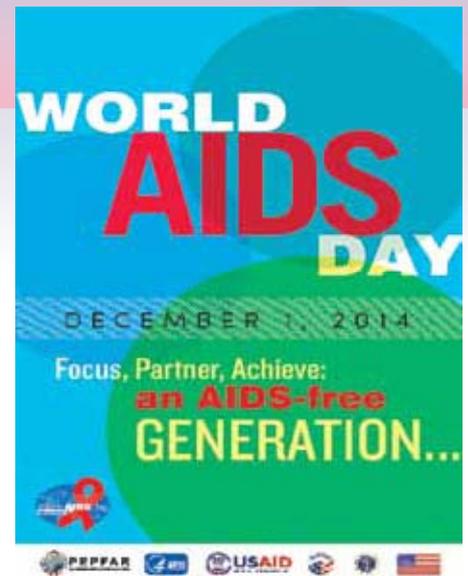


★ The Ambassador of German Embassy; H.E. Mr. Rolf Schulze awarded the DAAD scholarships 2014 (SEAMEO – Germany Programme of Cooperation) to 3 Ph.D. Tropical Medicine students; Mr. Komchaluch Taweeseeneepith, Mr. Narenrit Wamaketh and Dr. Myo Thiha Zaw at the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, Bangkok, Thailand, 15 October 2014

Coaching/Mentoring Workshop- TROPMED Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur



★ A three-day Coaching/Mentoring Workshop was organized for 30 senior staff of TROPMED Malaysia, 3-5 December 2014 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. This was a follow-up activity of the Regional workshop organized in Bangkok, Thailand last August 2014 by TROPMED network Office.



World AIDS Day 2014

In Thailand, the U.S. Embassy and interagency PEPFAR family commemorated World AIDS Day by participating in a national World AIDS Day 2014 festival hosted by the Ministry of Public Health and Thai Red Cross at the Bangkok Art and Culture Centre, themed “Getting to Zero: zero new infections, zero AIDS-related deaths, and zero discrimination.”

The three-day event (November 29 – December 1) was an opportunity to raise public awareness about stigma and discrimination, particularly towards men who have sex with men, transgender women, and people living with HIV.



The event had an exhibition of local artwork that illustrated and expressed the range of emotions felt by people suffering from HIV stigma and discrimination. Members of the public that visited the exhibit received information about the HIV epidemic in Thailand and the work of all partners to achieve an AIDS-free generation.



Several Thai celebrities, including Miss Universe Thailand 2014 and popular television and movie stars, visited the PEPFAR exhibit. After performing a dance to promote HIV prevention initiatives in Thailand, staff from a local PEPFAR partner conducted community outreach work among visitors to the World AIDS Day event.



"The U.S. Embassy Chargé d'affaires W. Patrick Murphy and the Minister of Public Health Prof. Dr. Rajata Rajatanavin meet at the PEPFAR exhibit"



"The Chargé d'affaires and the Minister of Public Health receive pre-test counseling by a nurse from SCC @TropMed and an HIV test from a DHAP/TUC lab technician, as the Director of Thailand's National AIDS Management Center, Director General of Department of Disease Control, MoPH, Director of Thai Red Cross AIDS Research Center and Director of Thailand MoPH-U.S. CDC Collaboration (TUC) look on"

On World AIDS Day, U.S. Embassy Chargé d'affaires W. Patrick Murphy joined the exhibition and spoke with distinguished members of the Thai government, including the Minister of Public Health, the Director of Thailand's Department of Disease Control, and the director of the Thai Red Cross. Showing their common support for the fight against stigma and discrimination, both the Chargé d'affaires and the Minister of Public Health received rapid HIV tests conducted by staff from the TUC who work at Silom Community Clinic @TropMed.



The World AIDS Day event was covered extensively by local television and in social media, culminating in a formal national ceremony during which HRH Princess Soamsawali presented a ceremonial gift to the Chargé in recognition of U.S. efforts through PEPFAR programs; USAID, U.S. CDC, and US Peace Corps initiatives; and partnerships in Thailand to achieve an AIDS-free generation.

Activities @Tropmed



★ Merry X' Mas & Happy New Year 2015 to our beloved alliances!



★ Celebration for His Majesty the King's 87th birthday on 5 December 2014 at Salaya campus, Mahidol University



★ Dr. Sarunya Kaewprasert from Department of Tropical Nutrition and Food Science received Cerebos Awards 2014 for her research title "Nutritional status particularly folate and vitamin B12 deficiencies and genetic factors in relation to cardiovascular disease and diabetes in Thai elderly" from Her Royal Highness Princess Soamsawali Phravaratatinuddamat at the Medical Association of Thailand, 22 December 2014



★ Congratulations to Dr. Pongrama Ramasoota, Director of Center of Excellence for Antibody Research (CEAR), Faculty of Tropical Medicine, Mahidol University on receiving the certificate of appreciation from Prof. Dr. Soottiporn Chittmittrapap, NCRT Secretary-General on the occasion of winning a gold medal and special prizes from the 10th Taipei International Invention Show & Technomart (INST 2014), 1 October 2014



★ TM Happiness Expo 2014, 5 November 2014

★ Faculty of Tropical Medicine, Mahidol University is joined by SEAMEO TROPMED Network, TROPMED Alumni Association, the Parasitology and Tropical Medicine Association of Thailand (PTAT), Department of Disease Control, Ministry of Public Health, Thailand and the Mahidol Oxford Tropical Medicine Research Unit (MORU) hosted the Joint International Tropical Medicine Meeting (JITMM 2014) and the 8th Seminar on Food- and Water-borne Parasitic Zoonoses (FBPZ8) with the theme “3D perspectives on Tropical Medicine: Drivers, Diversity and Determination”, Bangkok, Thailand, 2-4 December 2014



Keynote Speaker: Dr. BT Slingsby, CEO and Executive Director of the Global Health Innovative Technology (GHIT) Fund



Most Outstanding TropMed Alumni 2014

1. Col. Prof. Saovanee Leelayoova
2. Dr. Rattanaxay Phetsouvanh
3. Assoc. Prof. Sirichit Wongkamchai

Consultant: Dr. Yaowalark Sukthana, Dean, Faculty of Tropical Medicine, Mahidol University
Editors: Dr. Emsri Pongponratn, Deputy Dean for International Affairs and Jittapim Na Bangchang
Coordinators: Peerawat Maipanich, Rattanawadee Nanlar, Siriprang Chotchaimongkol and Pimrampai Boonyarit
Information Support: Malaria Consortium Asia, MOCID-BIKEN, MORU, SEAMEO, Silom Community Clinic @TropMed and WWARN
Graphic Design & Layout: Ronnachai Rareng

Produced by: Office of International Cooperation (OIC)
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