

AWARENESS, PRACTICES, AND HEALTH PROBLEMS OF BACKPACKERS TRAVELING DURING FLOODING IN THAILAND DURING 2011

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Abstract. During late 2011, Thailand experienced its worst flooding in 50 years with over 4.6 million people directly affected. During the flooding we conducted a cross sectional survey of backpackers in the Khao San Road area of Bangkok to determine awareness, practices, and their incidence of health problems during the flooding. A total of 422 subjects completed questionnaires which were analyzed. Seventy percent were European and 12.3% were North American. The overall median age was 27 years and the median stay in Thailand was 22 days. Most of the backpackers were aware of the flooding in Thailand; some had sought travel health information prior to their trip from various sources including the internet, their family physician or a travel clinic. However, even in travel clinics specific health advice related to flooding, such as leptospirosis risk/prevention, was rarely given to travelers. Fifteen point four percent of subjects (65/422) had come into contact with floodwater; 30.8% of those (20/65) washed their feet/legs afterward. Our findings indicate most backpackers were inadequately aware of potential health hazards, such as leptospirosis, during the floods.

Keywords: travel, flood, backpacker, Thailand

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