

PREVALENCE AND CHARACTERIZATION OF THALASSEMIA AMONG MIGRANT WORKERS FROM CAMBODIA, LAO PDR AND MYANMAR IN THAILAND

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Abstract. Thalassemia is one of the most common inherited diseases worldwide and is considered as a major public health concern in many countries including Thailand. With the establishment of ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), thalassemia prevention and control in Thailand will be more difficult as more AEC workers migrate into the country. This study characterized prevalence of thalassemia among migrant workers from Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar. Among 3,227 blood samples, 46.9% were thalassemia heterozygotes or disease, with 17 different thalassemia genotypes. Highest prevalence of homozygous (12.8%) and heterozygous (39.7%) Hb E were among workers from Lao PDR, while prevalence of α -thalassemia 1 carrier (1.8%), α -thalassemia 2 carrier (19.9%) and β -thalassemia heterozygote (3.9%) were highest among workers from Myanmar. These data should prove useful in formulating health policy for prevention, control and treatment of thalassemia among these migrant workers in Thailand.

Keywords: thalassemia, prevalence, migrant worker, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar,

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