TROPMED Inter News
Faculty of Tropical Medicine, Mahidol University
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Happy New Year 2018








During 6 – 8 December 2017, the Faculty of Tropical Medicine, Mahidol University joined by SEAMEO TROPMED Network, the Parasitology and Tropical Medicine Association of Thailand (PTAT), TROPMED Alumni Association, the Mahidol Oxford Tropical Medicine Research Unit (MORU), Thailand Center of Excellence for Life Sciences (Public Organization) TCELS, Ministry of Science and Technology and Department of Disease Control, Thailand Ministry of Public Health hosted Joint International Tropical Medicine Meeting 2017 (JITMM 2017) with the conference theme "Tropical Medicine 4.0 Effective Collaboration for an Impact on Global Health" at Amari Watergate Bangkok, Thailand. There were more than 800 participants, 140 oral presentations and 120 poster presentations at the event.

Targeting malaria hotspots in Cambodia by strengthening infrastructure

A new malaria post, designed to facilitate ongoing efforts to diagnose and treat malaria in hard-to-reach areas, has been established in Preah Vihear, Cambodia - a high transmission risk area along the border with Thailand.

The risk of malaria infection is naturally higher due to the itinerant lifestyles present in addition to the lack of diagnostic and treatment services in the region. Passers-by are screened by a mobile malaria worker (MMW) at the post and if a person tests positive, treatment can then be administered.

The establishment of malaria posts is a part of the wider Regional Artemisinin Initiative (RAI) Inter-country Component 2 (ICC2), running until December 2017. The project also oversees the mapping of hotspots of infection, and encourages the adoption of preventive behaviours within affected communities.

The RAI ICC2 initiative is funded by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis.

For more information, visit: https://goo.gl/XJsfsA

Successful applicants receive Dr. Sylvia Meek Scholarship

Malaria Consortium and Faculty of Tropical Medicine (FTM), Mahidol University (MU) set up an entomology scholarship in memory of Dr. Sylvia Meek, former Malaria Consortium Technical Director, to honour her outstanding work to help reduce the impact of vector borne diseases. On 31 August 2017, Carrie Brown, Dr. Meek's sister, was at a ceremony at FTM, MU to award the scholarships to two future entomologists, Ms. Somsanith Chonephetsarath and Mr. Muhammad Adnan.

At the event, Carrie Brown and Charles Nelson, Chief Executive of Malaria Consortium, officially awarded the scholarship to the two successful applicants in Asia, which will allow them to take on a two year masters.

For more information, visit: https://goo.gl/EvarJs

Malaria Consortium Cambodia contributes to a publication on dengue integrated vector management

The results of Malaria Consortium's trial to estimate the impact of guppy fish (guppies), in combination with the use of the larvicide pyriproxyfen (Sumilarv® 2MR), and Communication for Behavioral Impact (COMBI) activities to reduce entomological indices in Cambodia have been published in BioMed Central. This is an important publication as evidence on the effectiveness of low-cost, sustainable, biological vector-control tools for the Aedes mosquitoes is limited and a rigorous evaluation of these vector-control interventions is vital to developing an evidence-based dengue control strategy and to help direct government resources.

For more information, visit: https://goo.gl/LjvNAT

MOCID staff, Mr. Aekkachai Tuekprakhon attended International Conference in Malaysia

Mr. Aekkachai Tuekprakhon during the conference

Mr. Aekkachai Tuekprakhon attended International Conference on Virus Disease: One Health - one World in Kuching, Malaysia during 25 – 27 July 2017. He presented the topic of "Effects of Chikungunya virus envelope protein mutation on point of care diagnostic kit performance".

Visiting guest from Taiwan

Ms. Juthamas Padungsombat, Ms. narinee Srimark, Mr. Aekkachai Tuekprakhon, Dr. Marco Lin and Prof. Tatsuo Shioda (from left to right)

MOCID welcomed a visiting guest from Taiwan, Dr. Marco Lin during 24 July – 11 August 2017. His seminar took place on 11 August 2017 on the topic of "Phylodynamic and molecular evolution of clinical virus research".

Visiting guests from Japan

Prof. Emi E. Nakayama and Mr. Keita Suzuki (from left to right)

A PhD student from Japan, Mr. Keita Suzuki visited MOCID during 24 - 26 July 2017. He came to develop Diagnostic kits for Chikungunya virus.

In the front row, Prof. Tatsuo Shioda,
Prof. Yoshiharu Matsuura and Dr. Marco Lin (from left to right)

On 7 August 2017, MOCID welcomed a former Director of MOCID, Prof. Yoshiharu Matsuura who is currently a Director of Research Institute for Microbial Diseases.

Mr. Kanji Shibata, Mr. Kyotaro Nohata and
Prof. Emi E. Nakayama (from left to right)

Two medical students from Osaka University, Mr. Kanji Shibata and Mr. Kyotaro Nohata visited MOCID during 11 – 22 August 2017 for learning and observation of infectious diseases research.

Assoc. Prof. Pongrama Ramasoota, Collaborative Professor of Osaka University

Prof. Tatsuo Shioda and Assoc. Prof. Pongrama Ramasoota (from left to right)

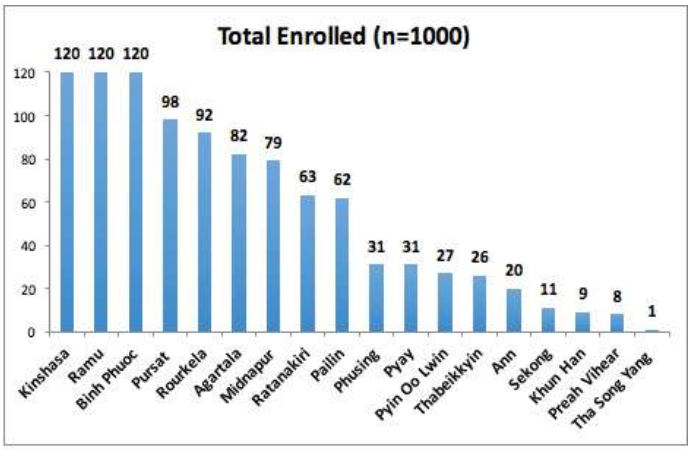
On 21 September 2017, Prof. Tatsuo Shioda visited Assoc. Prof. Pongrama Ramasoota and presented the certificate for appointment of Assoc. Prof. Pongrama Ramasoota as a Collaborative Professor of Osaka University at CEAR, Faculty of Tropical Medicine, Mahidol University.

Mahidol students visit SMRU

On 12 August, five students from Mahidol University's international Graduate Diploma in Tropical Medicine and Hygiene course and Prof. Prakaykaew Charunwatthana visited Tak Province as part of an elective. Besides other health care facilities on the Thailand-Myanmar border, they visited SMRU clinics at Wang Pha and Whang Pha TB clinic. Suphak Nosten, Lei Lei Swe and Tobias Brummaier provided background information on SMRU activities and tours in both SMRU sites. The students were mostly interested in malaria but also in the daily hardships that the mobile border population faces when in need of health care.

- Thank you, Tobias Brummaier for text and Suphak Nosten for photos

TRACII recruits patient number 1,000!



On 24 October, TRACII recruited its 1,000th patient, thanks to the study team in Ratanakiri, Cambodia. The TRAC II study, which maps resistance to antimalarials in Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Thailand, Myanmar, Bangladesh, India and the DR Congo, recruited its first patient on 12 August 2015.

Funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), TRACII is also assessing the safety, tolerability and efficacy of two Triple ACTs (TACTs) through a randomized trial. The TACTs will hopefully restore efficacy in areas where ACTs are currently failing. Furthermore, TACTs also aim to prolong the longevity of the artemisinins and partner drugs in areas where ACTs still work. TRACII pre-final results will be presented at the ASTMH and JITMM conferences this November and December. TRACII will complete its work in March 2018.

- Text and figure courtesy of Rob van der Pluijm and Arjen Dondorp

Bangladesh and Bangkok workshops keep Epidemiology hopping

Phew! Epidemiology certainly had a busy October, having organised three successful workshops, two in Bangladesh and one in Bangkok.

Bangladesh Malaria Mobility Genotyping Study results presented

On 14 October, MORU Epidemiology Head Prof. Richard Maude and Dr. Ipsita Sinha, along with GIS Specialist Sazid Ibna Zaman and Study Coordinator Didar Uddin, organised a workshop at the Cadet College Club, Dhaka, Bangladesh to present results from the study Assessing the contribution of migration to the emergence and spread of antimalarial drug resistance in Bangladesh. Meeting participants included co-investigators from Chittagong, the National Malaria Elimination Programme (NMEP) and key stakeholders from Communicable Disease Control (CDC), Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), Bangladesh.

After Prof. M. A. Faiz introduced the meeting, a lively debate and discussion followed around the results and their implications for the NMEP. This was the culmination of a large field study of 2,090 patients at 58 sites across the malaria endemic parts of Chittagong Division in 2015 and 2016. The project includes collaborators from MORU, The Sanger Institute, Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health, Princeton University, Chittagong Medical College, Malaria Research Group, BRAC, WHO and NMEP.

Bangladesh GroupMappers establish core GIS group

On 15 October, the Bangladesh GroupMappers held their first work workshop at the Cadet College Club. About 20 volunteer GroupMappers attended the workshop, which was led by MORU Epidemiology's Sazid Ibna Zaman, with support from Epidemiology colleagues Didar Uddin, Ipsita Sinha and Richard Maude.

Led by Sazid, GroupMappers is a citizen science initiative to crowdsource mapping of remote areas of Bangladesh. A group of 20 volunteer mappers consisting of experts and students from different universities and government offices in Dhaka worked together on collection and integration of geospatial information into disease surveillance systems for Bangladesh.

Special thanks for their insights go to Anjan Saha, NMEP Management Information System specialist and MORU Epidemiology's Didar Uddin, who is currently travelling around the Chittagong Hill Tracts mapping remote villages. This was the inaugural session with mappers establishing a core group that will continue to work collaboratively on methodology development and data collection in the coming months. Watch this space!

Inaugural ThaiGISNet meeting draws big crowd

On 24 October, ThaiGISNet, a network for Thai GIS professionals organised by MORU Epidemiology, held an inaugural meeting at Bangkok's Dice Café. ThaiGISNet seeks to strengthen the network of Thai GIS professionals and act as a platform where GIS enthusiasts can share GIS knowledge and experience.

The jam-packed meeting drew participants from universities, companies and government offices in Bangkok. Special mention goes to ThaiGISNet volunteer Ms. Phannisa Nirratiwongsakorn (centre) who helped organising ThaiGISNet and providing the group with cartography inputs – while working full-time at Thailand's Office of National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB).

Lively discussions and networking followed talks by MORU Epidemiology Head Richard Maude on GIS and Public Health and by NESDB's Ms. Phannisa on GIS and Environmental Planning. To find out more about ThaiGISNet and future events, kindly visit www.thaigis.net.

- With many thanks to Richard Maude, Ipsita Sinha and Sazid Ibna Zaman for text and photos

A busy fall for MORU Network melioidosis team

Left: David Dance, Direk Limmathurotsakul, Vanaporn (P'Lek) Wuthiekanun and Paul Turner. Top right: Sotharith Bory (Chief of Infectious Diseases Unit, Calmette Hospital, Phnom Penh), Paul Turner and Miliya Thyl (Clinical Microbiologist, AHC-COMRU). Bottom right: AHC-COMRU lab technicians Kolthida Right and Soeng Sona tune into the opening address.

In Phnom Penh, 17 - 20 November, clinicians and lab technicians from all over Cambodia joined the multi-day 2nd National Melioidosis Meeting Cambodia Training Event for Awareness of Melioidosis to raise awareness of melioidosis, a still vastly under-recognised cause of infection nationally.

To support the meeting's lab session, COMRU commissioned a short film in Khmer and English to demonstrate identification of B. pseudomallei using the Mahidol University latex agglutination test. Funded with support from MORU's Prof. Phaik Yeong Cheah and the Wellcome Trust, the video will be of use to lab technicians in a variety of settings. It can be viewed at http://www.tropmedres.ac/using-mahidol-s-b-pseudomallei-test-to-confirm-melioidosis-in-the-lab.

MORU's Vanaporn (P'Lek) Wuthiekanun and Direk Limmathurotsakul and LOMWRU's David Dance gave keynote presentations on aspects of melioidosis epidemiology, diagnosis and management and participated in clinical and lab workshops. COMRU director Paul Turner gave an overview of the diagnostic microbiology laboratory for clinicians, who often have had limited training in microbiology and infectious diseases. Soeng Sona and Miliya Thyl provided recent laboratory and clinical data from AHC-COMRU, whie AHC clinicians Sar Vuthy and Yos Pagnarith presented clinical case reports.

Provincial and national hospital staff gave updates on case detection and management: since 2005 over 2,500 cultured confirmed cases of melioidosis have been detected, with the numbers of cases increasing every year. The meeting concluded with David and Paul moderating a session where clinicians and lab staff discussed ways to improve melioidosis case detection.

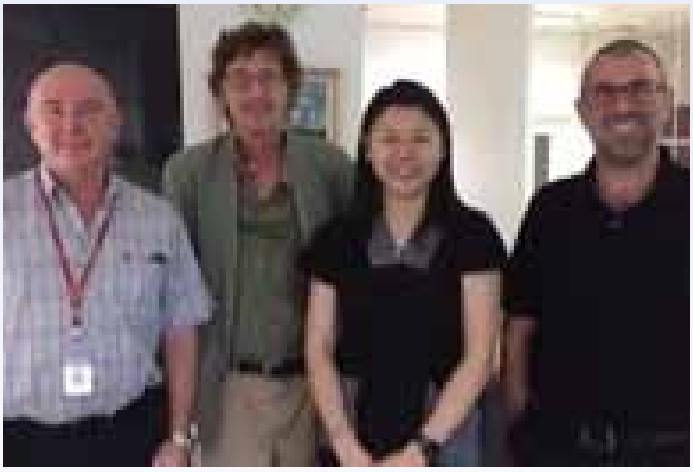
The Cambodia meeting was part of a busy late summer-autumn for MORU melioidosis researchers.

David Dance kicked off the 2nd South Asian Melioidosis Congress, held 29 - 30 August in Colombo, Sri Lanka with a historical perspective, sharing anecdotes about the earliest melioidosis researchers, including Lucius Nicholls, the first person to diagnose melioidosis in Sri Lanka. Direk Limmathurotsakul then described the global burden of the disease, whilst Narisara Chantratita updated attendees on developments in laboratory diagnosis and Wirongrong Chierakul gave an overview of treatment.

On 30 September, David Dance was an invited speaker at the annual meeting of the Myanmar Microbiology Society, for a symposium on Environmental Microbes and the Impact on Health: the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly. The following weekend, 7 - 8 October, P'Lek Wuthiekanun and Direk Limmathurotsakul both spoke at the 2nd National Conference on Melioidosis in Vietnam.

- Thank you, Paul Turner and David Dance, for text and photos

Maliwan and Tay successfully complete their PhD vivas



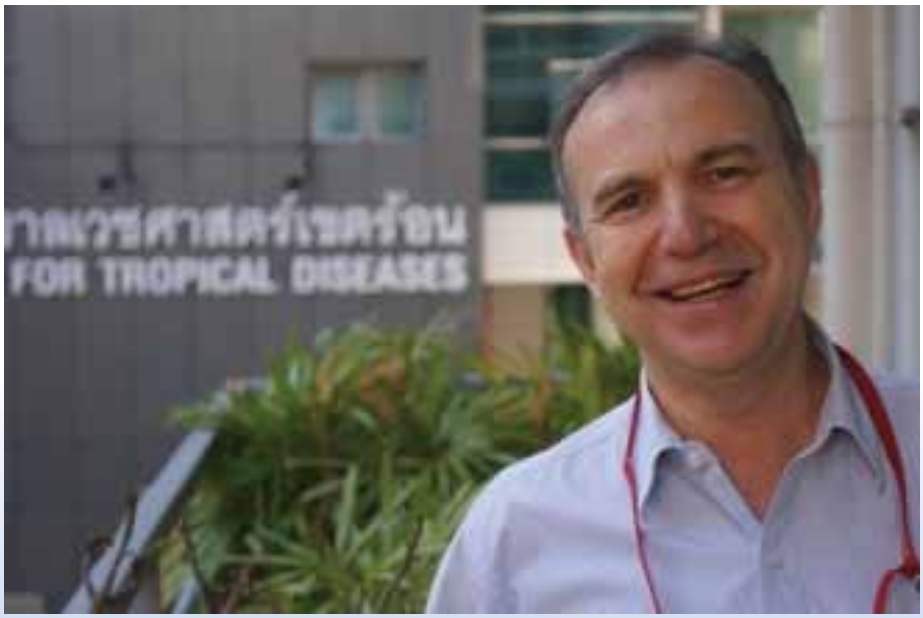
On 4 October, MORU colleagues gathered at MAEMOD's rooftop offices to congratulate Maliwan Hongsuwan (centre, photo left) for passing her PhD viva for her thesis, Developing and Evaluating Effective Interventions to Reduce Healthcare-associated Infection in a Resource-limited Hospital in Thailand. Her PhD supervisors were MORU's Ben Cooper, Direk Limmathurotsakul and Nick Day.

Maliwan's thesis aimed to describe the burden and trends in healthcare associated infections in northeast Thailand; investigate hand hygiene knowledge and beliefs among healthcare workers in a tertiary hospital in northeast Thailand and identify obstacles to improving it; and evaluate an intervention to improve hand hygiene compliance there based on WHO guidelines.

On 21 September, PhD student Wanitda (Tay) Watthanaworawit passed her PhD viva for her thesis, Evaluations of Diagnostic Tests for Undifferentiated Febrile Illness on the Thailand-Myanmar (Burma) border. Shown 2nd from right with her supervisors Stuart Blacksell, François Nosten and Paul Turner, Tay is based in SMRU's Microbiology Department.

- With thanks to Ben Cooper, Stuart Blacksell and Divaree Franssen for text and photos

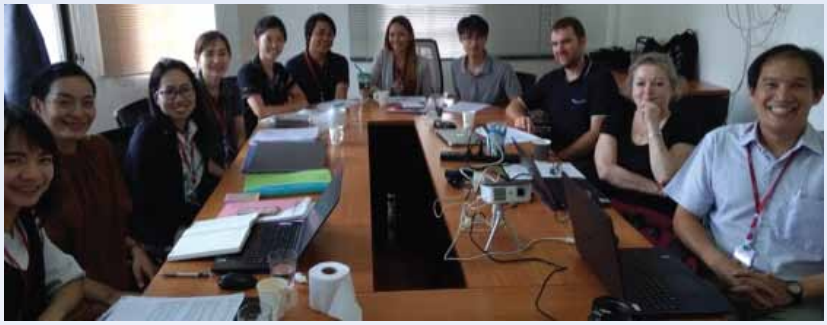
Grant to assess safety of new primaquine regimen in healthy G6PD deficient men



Bob Taylor has obtained an MRC grant under the Developmental Pathway Funding Scheme (DPFS). The grant will fund a study that will examine the safety of a new ascending dose of primaquine in healthy male volunteers who are deficient in the red cell enzyme glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase (G6PD).

The study, which will take place in the pharmacokinetic ward in Mahidol and at SMRU, involves increasing the dose of primaquine every five days but this can be varied according to the haemoglobin concentration which will be closely monitored. Primaquine will be given for a total of 20 days. If this study is successful, Bob and his team will test the primaquine regimen in vivax infected patients.

Chiangrai Research Unit's START study kicks off



From left: Zulin (Chiangrai (CR)), Ben (CTSG), Gip (CR), Pui (CR), Aom (CTSG), Geng (CR), Bee (CR), Tong (CR), Tobias (SMRU), Zoe (CTSG) and Chiangrai Research Unit head Tri.

Scrub typhus remains a key area of research for the team at the MORU study site in Chiangrai, Thailand. During two particularly wet days, 17 - 18 July, the team hosted MORU's Clinical Trials Support Group (CTSG) and co-investigators for a site initiation visit for the Scrub Typhus Antibiotic Resistance Trial (START).

START is a randomized, open-label, controlled trial that aims to evaluate and compare the efficacy of scrub typhus treatment with 7 days of doxycycline, 3 days of doxycycline and 3 days of azithromycin, in an area where drug resistance was previously reported over 20 years ago. START will perform detailed pharmacokinetic/pharmacodynamics analysis, culture and susceptibility testing of isolates of Orientia tsutsugamushi, the causative bacteria of scrub typhus, and immunological assays. Now open for business in Chiangrai, START began recruitment in Mae Sot in late August.

- Thank you, Tri Wangrangsimakul, for text and photo

Durban hosts annual Oxford Global Health Bioethics meetings

MORU was a big presence at the annual bioethics and research 'spring' school organised by the Wellcome Trust-funded Oxford Global Health Bioethics Network held 24 - 29 September in Durban, South Africa and hosted by the Africa Health Research Institute (AHRI), a Wellcome Major Overseas Programme.

MORU attendees Prof. Phaik Yeong Cheah, Nattapat (Nok) Jatuporpimol, Bipin Adhikari and Napat Khirikoekkong, joined by Ladda Kajeechiwa from SMRU, were active participants throughout the week-long school, which included posters and presentations, rich discussions on ethical issues in research, practical problem solving sessions, and a field visit to a community that hosts AHRI's clinic and research building.

Nattapat and Phaik Yeong presented preliminary findings from the qualitative study Ethical challenges related to consent following the implementation of a new data sharing policy. Phaik Yeong's lead debate Have we focused too much in research consent? Successfully encouraged debaters and participants to openly share their thoughts and experiences.

On day 4, Nattapat and Assoc. Prof. Vicki Marsh (Centre for Tropical Medicine and Global Health, Nuffield Department of Medicine) co-led a seminar discussion on Ethics of research with vulnerable groups. This session introduced the importance of researchers developing an in-depth understanding of the individuals and communities participating in research to prevent the subjects becoming more vulnerable because of their study participation. In addition, Ladda Kajeechiwa's entertaining "energizer" sessions were much enjoyed ice breakers that helped increase communications between participants.

- With thanks to Nattapat (Nok) Jatuporpimol and Bipin Adhikari for text and photo

Hats on for Lisa at latest BKKSci Café

Bangkok Scientifique is a public engagement with science initiative supported by the Department of Bioethics and Engagement at MORU. On 30 August, Prof. Lisa White (left) of MORU led an engaging and fun interactive session on mathematical modelling for 25 participants at Café Tartine in Bangkok.

Lisa kicked things off by asking attendees to assume that an unknown infection was spreading at the café. Participants were given conical caps and told to stand up from their seats as directed, starting with the index case and proceeding as the infection spread across the room.

Lisa then gave a fascinating chat on the role of mathematical modelling in outbreak prediction and her work at MORU to predict anti-malarial resistance. This drew audience several questions on the current epidemiology of malaria control in the Greater Mekong Sub-region and the future. The Q&A was followed by a discussion of other infections, including the SARS outbreak, and Lisa's concluding remarks on infectious disease prediction models and their use in guiding health interventions.

- Text and photos courtesy of Bipin Adhikari

CRP study closes study sites, gets to work on results

After holding closing visits mid-September at its study sites in Yangon and Chiangrai, the C-reactive protein (CRP) study team got busy preparing their results for ASTMH and JITMM and began planning an implementation study of CRP testing across dozens of primary care units in Chiangrai using a stepped wedge cluster randomized trial design.

Led by study PI Yoel Lubell and study coordinators Rachel Greer and Thomas Althaus, the study aimed to see if CRP testing in primary care could safely reduce the use of antibiotics in febrile patients. Seeking to integrate the CRP test as a point-of-care test in a simple clinical algorithm to manage febrile patients, the study sought to:

- Assess the impact of C-reactive protein (CRP) on antibiotics prescriptions in any acute febrile patients attending low-resources primary settings;
- Validate CRP testing's ability to discriminate between viral and bacterial pathogens;
- Assess key pathogens' prevalence in remote areas, thereby improving empirical antibiotics management.

Funded by a Wellcome Trust ISSF award and by the Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics (FIND), the CRP trial began in June 2016 in Chiangrai and October 2016 in Yangon. Working closely with MOCRU and Medical Action Myanmar (MAM) in Yangon and the Chiangrai Clinical Research Unit (CCRU) in Thailand, the CRP study recruited ~2,400 child and adult fever patients from 6 primary care centres in Chiangrai and 4 study sites on the outskirts of Yangon.

-Text and photos courtesy of Thomas Althaus

Collaborative research prospects top Prism workshop agenda

On 25 - 29 September, MORU Bangkok hosted the PRISM²-MAℰMOD workshop in Infectious Disease Modelling, Research and Training. Co-organised by MORU's MAℰMOD, TDModNet and Australia's PRISM² group, the workshop included two days of clinic drop-in model training and three days discussing collaborative research opportunities.

MORU MAℰMOD colleagues joined workshop attendees from Mahidol University and about 15 guests from Australia's University of New South Wales, University of Melbourne and James Cook University including Prof. Miles Davenport and Assoc. Prof. James Wood from UNSW and UOM Assoc. Prof. James McCaw. Collaborative opportunities discussed included:

- Research on malaria within-host studies, household and demographic modelling and some common health policy questions for modellers;
- Building capacity through future workshop between groups;
- Inviting and funding TDModNet members to join future meetings;
- Joint supervision, visiting student scholarships and sharing online teaching materials;
- Building modelling training packages.

- Thank you Wirichada (Pan) Pan-ngum and Divaree Pranssen for text and photo

New Oxford Associate Profs named

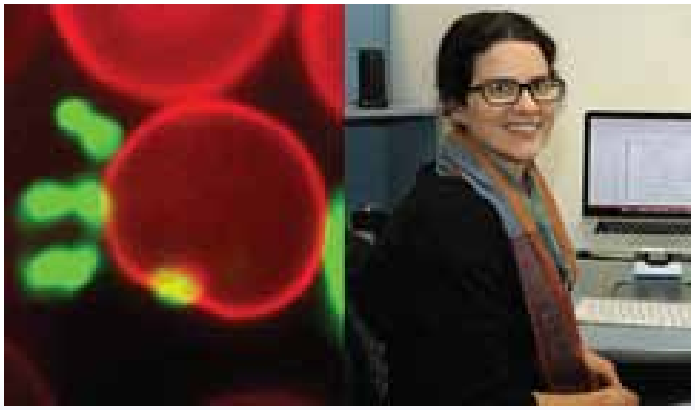
In September, the University of Oxford conferred the title of Associate Professor to MORU's Yoel Lubell (left), Head of Economics and Translational Research, and to Olivo Miotto from the Centre for Genomics and Global Health. In addition, Louise Thwaites, Clinical Research Fellow at OUCRU, MORU's sister unit in Vietnam, was appointed University Research Lecturer.

Cherry earns Wellcome Fellowship

Cherry Lim has been awarded a 3-year Wellcome Training Fellowship in Public Health and Tropical Medicine. The Wellcome Training Fellowship will support Cherry's project to study the burdens of antimicrobial-resistant (AMR) infection and the association between antibiotic use and patient outcome in Southeast Asia. The outcome will be a more accurate estimation of health burdens due to AMR infection in Southeast Asia, which is important to assist design and assessment of health interventions to prevent AMR infections. This fellowship will be a great opportunity for Cherry to be trained in conducting a prospective study and in performing advanced statistical analysis with the experts in the field.

Cherry is based at MORU Microbiology in Bangkok. Her supervisors are Direk Limmathurotsakul, Ben Cooper, Prof. Guy Thwaites and Prof. Nick Day. Please join us in extending heartiest congratulations to Cherry as she enters this exciting new chapter of her career!

Kerryn Moore awarded prize

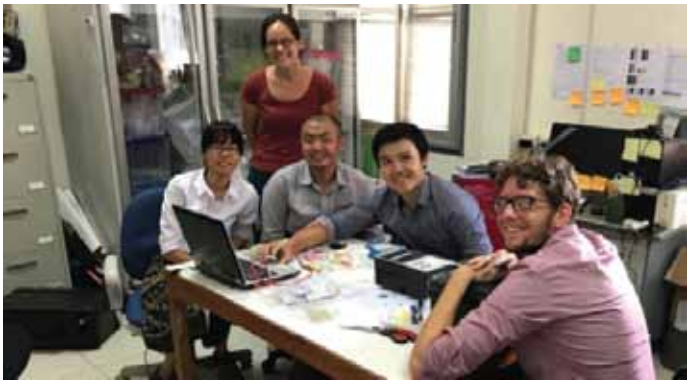


On 6 July, Kerryn Moore, a PhD candidate at Burnet Institute and the University of Melbourne based part time at SMRU, was awarded the Aileen Plant Memorial Prize for her research studying malaria in pregnant women under the supervision of Assoc. Prof. Freya Fowkes, Assoc. Prof. Julie Simpson and SMRU Deputy Director Prof. Rose McGready. Please join us in extending your heartiest congratulations to Kerryn and all involved in supporting her.

Laos survey of antibiotic resistance and consumption begins

In early July, LOMWRU's Global Point Prevalence Survey of Antibiotic Consumption and Resistance (Global-PPS) clinical team began a PPS Survey at Mahosot Hospital, Vientiane. Global-PPS collects data from around the world to monitor rates of antimicrobial prescribing in hospitalized patients. Shown as they set off to Mahosot Hospital are Laos Global-PPS team members, from left: Dr. Sayaphet Rattanavong, Dr. Manophab Luangraj, Dr. Tookta Bounkhoun, Dr. Onanong Sengvilaipraserth, Dr. Danoy Chommanam, Dr. Anousone Duangnouvong and Dr. Vilada Chansamouth. In Lao PDR, PPS has now begun at Mahosot Hospital and will soon expand to three Lao provincial hospitals. Funded globally by bioMérieux, the Lao PPS project is led by Dr. Vilada Chansamouth with the help of Dr. Tamalee Roberts.

Meet the LOMWRU Medicine Quality team



We caught LOMWRU's Medicine Quality team hard at work in Vientiane evaluating the pros and cons of innovative portable devices to screen medicine quality. From left: Vayouly Vidhamaly, Serena Vickers, Olay Boupha, Kem Boutsamay and Stephen Zambrzycki. Their work is part of the Medicine Quality project funded by Asian Development Bank (ADB) in collaboration with the Georgia Institute of Technology (USA), the Lao Ministry of Health and MORU.

Myanmar B. pseudomallei study starts

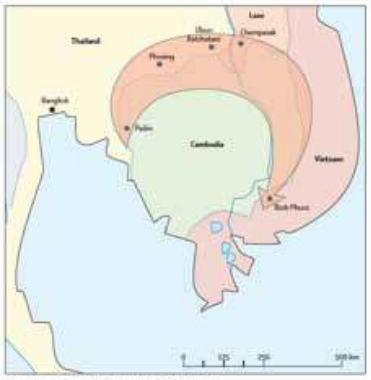
MOCRU and its partner Medical Action Myanmar (MAM) have begun a study to identify areas in Myanmar where Burkholderia pseudomallei is present in the soil and where people are at risk of melioidosis. Funded by MAM, the study will run for 6 - 12 months and also contribute to the global mapping of B. pseudomallei.

MOCRU Director Frank Smithuis is PI for the study, which will take 2,000 samples from 200 locations across Myanmar and then look at hospitals where B. pseudomallei seems prevalent and see if it can confirm melioidosis in patients. The Department of Medical Research will do the microbiology for the study.

Although melioidosis was first described in Rangoon (Yangon) in 1912, the distribution of B. pseudomallei in soil and the extent of melioidosis in Myanmar remains largely unknown. Local studies have confirmed the presence of B. pseudomallei in soil and confirmed clinical cases of melioidosis in Yangon. Other melioidosis cases have been found on the Thai-Myanmar border. A landmark 2015 study by MORU Direk Limmathurotsakul estimated that may have been up to 6,247 melioidosis cases resulting in 3,687 deaths in Myanmar in 2015.

- Text and photos courtesy of Frank Smithuis and Liz Ashley

Superbug's spread to Vietnam threatens malaria control



A warning by MORU researchers that a highly drug resistant malaria 'superbug' from western Cambodia is now present in southern Vietnam and leading to high failure rates for DHA-piperaquine – Vietnam's national frontline malaria treatment continues to draw global interest from media, donors and public health authorities.

Published 21 September in The Lancet Infectious Diseases, Spread of a single multidrug resistant malaria parasite (PfPailin) to Vietnam, the study was written by MORU's Mallika Imwong, Nick White and Ajren Dondorp and OUCRU (Vietnam) colleagues Tran Tinh Hien and Nguyen Thuy-Nhien.

The warning was covered by the BBC and international newswires, including the Associated Press and Agence France Presse (AFP). This led to pickup by websites of the Washington Post, NY Times, ABC TV and local TV and press outlets in the USA and Canada. Other coverage includes CTV (Canada), ABC (Australia) NPR Drive, Science, Voice of America (Vietnamese, Khmer services), AsiaTimes, and local media in Southeast Asia, India, Bangladesh and Africa. You can read the full story on the MORU site at http://www.tropmedres.ac/superbug-s-spread-to-vietnam-threatens-malaria-control.

Cambodia's first MALDI-ToF arrives

At the end of August, Cambodia's first MALDI-ToF (matrix assisted laser desorption/ionisation time of flight) microbial identification system was delivered to COMRU and Angkor Hospital for Children (AHC). Selected since it offers the ability to use both locked (FDA-approved clinical use) and open (research use) identification databases in parallel, COMRU's bioMerieux VITEK MS system was expected to be fully operational by mid-October. It will be used for all routine microbial identification in the clinical microbiology lab. First research projects will include development of MALDI-ToF-based pneumococcal serotyping and a phenotypic assessment of longitudinal dynamics of the nasopharyngeal microbiota in children. In addition to using the VITEK MS for AHC and COMRU work we hope to make it available to other laboratories in Cambodia as part of the emerging national AMR surveillance network activities.

- Thank you, Paul Turner, for text and photos

TuNDRA study kicks off in Siem Reap

On 21 June, COMRU and the Angkor Hospital for Children (AHC) hosted the kick-off meeting for the multi-country Real-time Tracking of Neglected Bacterial Infectious Diseases Resistance Patterns Asia (TuNDRA) study.

Investigators discussed final details of this 5-year study, which will enrol children aged 0 - 59 months who have been hospitalised with suspected invasive bacterial infection. TuNDRA will look at the bacteria causing severe infections, the antibiotic resistance in those organisms and determine the proportion of children with suspected bacterial infection who are unnecessarily treated with antibiotics.

TuNDRA investigators will collect samples to determine the bacteria responsible for these infections and their antimicrobial resistance profiles. Bacterial isolates will be sent to Steve Baker at OUCRU for whole genome sequencing at regular intervals throughout the study. Swabs will be collected for PCR detection of respiratory viruses (influenza A/B and respiratory syncytial virus) to determine the proportion of children treated with antibiotics unnecessarily.

TuNDRA will recruit in Bangladesh (Dhaka, Child Health Research Foundation), Cambodia (Angkor Hospital for Children, COMRU), and Vietnam (Ho Chi Minh City, OUCRU). The study is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Health and co-ordinated by the Robert Koch Institute (RKI), Germany and the International Vaccine Institute (IVI), South Korea.

- Thank you, Paul Turner, for text and Carsten Mantel (RKI) for photo

Village Drama results presented to Cambodia health authorities

Dr. Yok Sovann, Deputy Director, Pailin Public Health Department, joined by Ms. Nou Sanann, MORU Pailin Public Engagement Officer, presented results from MORU community engagement activities to raise malaria elimination awareness in remote Cambodia villages to the bi-monthly Technical Working Group of Health (TWGH) meeting on 12 October at the Ministry of Health (MoH) in Phnom Penh.

Dr. Sovann discussed the mechanics and impact since July 2016 of Village Drama against Malaria performances in 15 targeted remote villages in Pailin Province. Working closely with Cambodia health and local authorities, Village Drama against Malaria used Cambodian drama, art, music and local performers to produce shows on malaria infection, symptoms and prevention and other important local issues such as infant vaccination. Public health authorities report high participation rates and positive feedback from villagers and local health workers.

Dr. Sovann's presentation generated lively debate and comments from the 43 TWGH attendees, who included high level representatives from provincial health departments, national malaria control and international agencies, and NGOs.

Dr. Luciano Tuseo, Head of Malaria Programme at WHO Cambodia, commented positively on Village Drama against Malaria, suggesting that it should expand to other malaria hot spots in Cambodia. H.E. Prof. Dr. Eng Hout, Secretary of State (MoH), favourably noted Village Drama's low cost and high effectiveness and said its expansion to other high risk malaria spots should be considered.

Funded by a Wellcome Trust (UK) Provision for Public Engagement award, Village Drama is organised by Ms. Nou Sanann and Dr. Yok Sovann, with support from MORU Cambodia Targeted Malaria Elimination (TME) team members Rupam Tripuram and Tom Peto.

Clinical Malaria team celebrates 15 years in Chittagong

17 June 2017 marked the 15th anniversary of the research collaboration between MORU and Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMC), Chittagong, Bangladesh. To commemorate this, a seminar was held with the CMC Principal and Director, and previous Heads of the Department of Medicine. Long-time MORU collaborators Prof. M.A. Faiz, and Dr. Aniruddha Ghose chaired the meeting. Dr. Katherine Plewes presented the results of the Paracetamol RCT here, as well as at additional meetings in Cox's Bazar and Ramu. Dr. Stije Leopold presented ongoing work on metabolic acidosis in severe malaria, lung ultrasounds and the use of recovery positions in acute coma. A final word of thanks was given by MORU Deputy Director and Head of Malaria Prof. Arjen Dondorp, who highlighted successful research efforts resulting in over 60 publications!

To kick-start the research season Mrs. Marja Schilstra joined the Clinical Malaria team for CRF training, Ms. Jaruwan Tubprasert for GCP training and Asst. Prof. Phaik Yeong Cheah came for a Research Ethics Seminar. Other visitors included visiting physicians Dr. Alex Kumar and Dr. Luigi Pisani (working on ICU studies in low and middle income countries).

- Text and photos courtesy of Stije Leopold and Katherine Plewes

SMRU trains Nepal malaria workers in mosquito surveillance

Starting 28 August, SMRU began entomological training for members of the Nepalese National Malaria Elimination Program. Supported by the Global Fund, the two 4-day training sessions ran in Mae Sot from 28 August to 8 September. They are the first steps of a capacity building process that will allow the Nepalese National Malaria Elimination Program to implement an entomological surveillance for Plasmodium falciparum elimination.

In total, 19 entomologists from Nepal attended the training. They learned how to organize entomological surveys, discriminate between mosquito species and identify Anopheles mosquitoes from Nepal. The attendees also learned how to store samples, record data and report entomological indices of malaria transmission. Victor Chameau organised the training sessions, which were conducted by Mr. Prasan Kankaew and Ms. Thithiworada Kulabkeere.

- With thanks to Victor Chameau for text and Suphak Nosten for photos

PAC study team in Uganda for site initiation visit

In 26 - 28 July, Bob Taylor, Prayoon Yuentrakul, Brian Mutinda and Mehul Dhorda visited Mbale in eastern Uganda to conduct pre study training and the site initiation visit for the Primaquine in African Children (PAC) study being conducted at the Mbale Regional Referral Hospital in Uganda and in Kinshasa, DR Congo. Funded by the Wellcome Trust, DFID and the Medical Research Council (MRC) under the Joint Global Health Trials scheme, the PAC study aims to assess the safety of a new, MORU-designed, age-based regimen of single low dose primaquine for transmission blocking in African children with acute uncomplicated falciparum malaria who have glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase (G6PD) deficiency.

The MORU team was well received and made very welcome by the Mbale team, headed by Dr. Peter Olupot-Olupot. Other attendees had flown in from KEMRI-Kilifi, including Profs Kath Maitland and Tom Williams, lab scientist Sophie Uyoga, Ayub Mpoya (trial management) and Gideon Nyutu (data management).

- With thanks to Bob Taylor for text and Prayoon Yuentrakul for photos

Emory University Clinical Trial Unit Leaders Site Visit at SCC @TropMed

During 21 - 22 September 2017, Dr. Jeffrey Lennox, Associate Dean for Clinical Research and Professor of Medicine at Emory University School of Medicine, Dr. Mark Mulligan, Professor of Medicine at Emory School of Medicine and Executive Director of the Hope Clinic of the Emory Vaccine Center and Ms. Tanisha Sullivan, Clinical Trial Units (CTU) Coordinator visited the Thailand MOPH – U.S. CDC Collaboration (TUC) and SCC @TropMed to discuss current and future projects and planning for the upcoming CTU/CRS re-competition.

The Emory University-CDC CTU was designated by U.S. National Institutes of Health (U.S. NIH) as one of 37 CTUs responsible for implementing the scientific agenda of the NIH international HIV/AIDS clinical research network. The Emory-CDC CTU has conducted clinical trials within three networks sponsored by the U.S. NIH: the AIDS Clinical Trial Group (ACTG), HIV Vaccine Trials Network (HVTN) and HIV Prevention Trials Network (HPTN). SCC @TropMed is one Clinical Research Site (CRS) and a part of the Emory-CDC CTU that includes four CRSs: two in Atlanta, Georgia US; one in Kisumu, Kenya; and one in Bangkok, Thailand.

Every 7 years, the U.S. NIH competitively renews its funding for the HIV clinical research networks operating in the U.S. and internationally. The current agreements supporting the existing network structure are set to end in 2020. U.S. NIH is taking a proactive approach to refine the research enterprise and drive discovery of new HIV prevention and treatment modalities. In order to establish a forward-looking agenda to guide this process, U.S. NIH will determine the focus and priorities of its HIV clinical trial networks through 2027. In 2018 and 2019, all sites will be competing for the next award with NIH. SCC @TropMed is conducting a study on long-acting pre-exposure prophylaxis for HIV prevention which will be critical for future support as a part of the HPTN (HPTN 083). Emory University leaders offered suggestions to SCC @TropMed on how to optimally compete for future network funding.

Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) Consultation Meeting in October 2017

SCC @TropMed hosted the PrEP Consultation Meeting on 11 October 2017 at Danai Bunnag conference room on the 6th floor of the Hospital for Tropical Diseases, Mahidol University. More than 40 invited participants representing government sector, research institutes, and international aid and development organizations, implementing partner agencies and community based organizations attended the Consultation Meeting.

The main objective of the meeting was to discuss current PrEP activities and PrEP demand generation in Thailand. There were four invited guest speakers who shared their knowledge and lessons learned about PrEP services and implementation. Firstly, Dr. Chris Beyrer, Professor from Johns Hopkins School of Public Health gave a presentation on the topic of PrEP for Young MSM who sell sex, showed the result of PrEP efficacy from clinical trials, demand for PrEP in Asia, current PrEP availability in Asia, research on PrEP demand, how to increase awareness through community education and PrEP pilot projects, and the importance of raising awareness among health providers and policymakers. Secondly, Dr. Michael Thigpen, Director of HIV/STD Research Program (HSRP), Thailand MOPH – US CDC Collaboration gave a presentation on the overview of Combination Prevention Effectiveness Study for Young MSM: COPE4YMSM which will be conducted at SCC @TropMed to assess effectiveness of open label combination HIV prevention intervention with, and without, daily oral Truvada® PrEP in YMSM and TGW population.

Thirdly, Dr. Nittaya Phanuphak from the Thai Red Cross AIDS Research Centre gave an update on the time line of PrEP Implementation in Thailand and the overview of Thailand's PrEP Programs. Lastly, Dr. Taweesap Siriprapasiri, Senior Expert in Preventive Medicine from Department of Disease Control, Ministry of Public Health also gave a presentation on the Thailand's PrEP Development, Thailand National Guidelines 2017, pilot and current services of PrEP in Thailand (10 provinces) and three options to be proposed for PrEP service in prevention package in National Health Coverage Scheme.

First Enrollment in COPE4YMSM Study

Combination Prevention Effectiveness Study for Young MSM: COPE4YMSM is now open for participant enrollment. The first participant was screened and enrolled into the study at Silom Community Clinic @TropMed (SCC @TropMed) on 10 October 2017.

The purpose of the COPE4YMSM study is to develop and assess the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of a combination intervention for prevention of HIV infection among HIV uninfected at risk young (18-26 year old) men who have sex with men (YMSM) and transgender women (TGW) in Bangkok and Pattaya, Thailand, who self-report having sold or traded sex to another man for money, drugs, or other goods or services in the previous 12 months.

The study will be an open label, non-randomized assessment comparing the relative effectiveness of a combination preventive intervention with and without daily oral tenofovir/emtricitabine (Truvada®) pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) with adherence support. The outcome will be assessed using a person-time approach, assessing HIV incidence densities among YMSM and TGW on and off daily oral PrEP over 12 months of follow-up. The overall study duration is 5 years. The time on study for any given participant in the intervention phase will be approximately 12 months, longer for participants who initiate PrEP after baseline to ensure 12 months of follow-up time on PrEP.

The primary study site is the SCC @TropMed in Bangkok, Thailand. Additional sites for study visits and Truvada® distribution will include two sites in Bangkok – Rainbow Sky Association of Thailand (RSAT Bangkok) and Service Workers in Group Foundation (SWING Bangkok) and one site in Pattaya – Service Workers in Group (SWING Pattaya). For more information about the COPE4YMSM study, please contact Khun Tareerat at phone number: 081 859 0397.

WWARN makes online mapping software open source

The WWARN Informatics team has made the source code behind their online tools, such as online mapping software, freely available. Find out how you can use it.

Open source software has revolutionised the development of online tools, and levelled the playing field for small groups developing software to suit their needs. Open source software has many benefits for the development of web applications—cost, flexibility, freedom, security, and accountability. It is created and supported by a global community of individual developers and organisations, many of whom also live by open source values such as collaboration.

In the spirit of collaboration and sharing, the WWARN Informatics team has made the framework behind their online mapping tools freely available. The interactive application called 'WWARN Maps Surveyor' is a mapping platform for visualising occurrence data[1] to support statistical reporting, public health surveillance, and health research.

WWARN currently uses the software to communicate geospatial and temporal information about the prevalence of molecular markers of antimalarial drug resistance, reports on medicine quality in a country, pharmaceutical crime laws, the aetiology of non-malarial febrile illness across continents, and has several more projects in the pipeline.

However, the use of this tool framework goes beyond geo-visualisation of research data. The platform can, for instance, facilitate functions such as decision support, statistical mapping, crime surveillance and potentially, live mapping humanitarian crisis information. The tool can even be used offline in areas with little or no levels of Internet connectivity.

"This software is a great foundation for anyone wanting to display any type of occurrence data over time and space, with faceted search and browsing" says Nigel Thomas, WWARN Senior Software Architect. "We want the developer community to build on and improve what we've developed for their own purposes and improve surveillance mapping technologies use across a variety of fields, not just for resistance mapping."

As local developer communities grow in lower-income countries and focus shifts to global health issues, online open source systems such as the Surveyor framework are providing far-reaching and innovative tools to support increased efficiency, productivity and performance of global health geo visualisation and surveillance needs. These new innovations can be shared with others and built upon, updated and tailored from project to project and from country to country.

"When it comes to global health, the open source emphasis on collaboration, local capacity building and system strengthening is helping research teams and local communities across the world," says Dr. Chris Paton, Head of the Global Health Informatics Group, University of Oxford. "Making the framework for the WWARN Maps Surveyor tool freely available will allow developers to design their own visualisations around occurrence data more efficiently and cost effectively – this source-code has great potential for a wide range of fields."

The team are planning to make further source data available in the future such as hybrid encryption software, dictionary mapping software and continue to update the Surveyor framework.

The source code can be found freely available on GitHub. The team has also set-up a google web forum at Worldwide Antimalarial Resistance Network Open Source Software. If you would like to find out more about the Surveyor tools or would like to collaborate on a project, please get in touch: info@wwarn.org

[1] Occurrence data simply record an observation of a disease at a given location and time, Hay, S.I. et al., 2013. Global mapping of infectious disease. Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London.Series B, Biological Sciences, 368(1614), p.20120250. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2012.0250.

WWARN Proficiency Testing programme earns ISO accreditation

On 7 October, the WWARN Pharmacology Proficiency Testing Programme was awarded official Proficiency Testing Provider accreditation ISO 17043:2010 – one of the highest achievements in international standards. WWARN was re-certified after a stringent inspection of WWARN's standards of service by the Bureau of Laboratory Accreditation (BLA), Department of Science Services (DSS) of Thailand. In the process, WWARN added Artemether to their list of proficiency testing items to expand their scope of antimalarial drug samples in plasma.

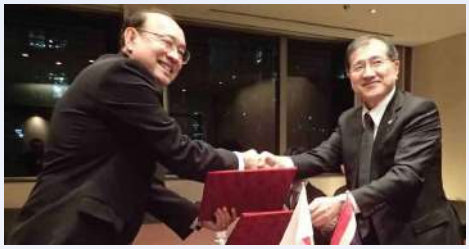
- With thanks to WWARN QA/QC Manager Chris Lourens for sharing this news

WWARN up for Times Higher Education Award

On 7 September, the WorldWide Antimalarial Resistance Network (WWARN) was shortlisted for a 2017 Times Higher Education (THE) Award in the International Collaboration of the Year category. Known as the 'Oscars of higher education', the THE Awards recognise "the talent, dedication and innovation of individuals and teams across all aspects of university life". The 'International Collaboration of the Year' category acknowledges "exceptional projects carried out jointly between a UK institution and one or more international partners".

A collaborative research network that works to provide the information necessary to optimise antimalarial treatments and reduce the number of people falling ill and dying from malaria, WWARN works with over 260 collaborators across the world as is part of the Oxford-based Infectious Diseases Data Observatory (IDDO).

MORU Bangkok hosts WWARN's Asia Regional Network, which promotes high quality data collection on malarial drug resistance, partners with MORU to support regional clinical trials and hosts the External Quality Assurance Programme. The winners will be announced on Thursday 30 November 2017 at an awards ceremony at the Grosvenor House Hotel, London.



During 23 – 26 November 2017, Dean Pratap Singhasivanon attended JSTM (Japanese Society of Tropical Medicine) Conference in Tokyo, Japan and paid a visit to National Center For Global Health and Medicine for signing MOU.

On 2 October 2017, Dean Pratap Singhasivanon chaired "Training of regional level health staff on malaria elimination in Thailand" for hospital personnel and public health staffs from all over Thailand. This is a collaborative program of the Faculty of Tropical Medicine, Mahidol University, WHO and Department of Disease Control, Ministry of Public Health, Thailand.

Elective Program in Tropical Medicine for 2 medical doctors and 8 medical students from Japan, Myanmar and Austria during 31 July - 25 August 2017

On 7 July 2017, Prof. Dr. Srivicha Krudsood, Deputy Dean for Research paid a visit to Hospitals in FTM Collaboration Network, Chiangrai Prachanukroh and Payao Provincical Hospitals.

15th International Training Course on Management of Malaria for 25 distinguished physicians, scientists and health experts from 8 respective courtiers; Indonesia, Japan, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Cambodia, Sri Lanka and Thailand during 21 - 25 August 2017

During 13 - 24 November 2017, the Faculty of Tropical Medicine, Mahidol University conducted a training course on Global Infectious Disease Control for medical doctors and nurses from Japan. This course consists of lectures on important tropical diseases, clinical and laboratory diagnosis for tropical diseases, ward rounds and case presentation.

On 7 July 2017, Prof. Polrat Wilairatana, Director of the Hospital for Tropical Diseases warmly welcomed Delegations from Vietnam, led by Prof. Phung Dac Cam, Vice Rector and Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy, Thanh Do University to the Faculty of Tropical Medicine, Mahidol University, Hospital for Tropical Diseases and School of Assistant Nurse.

On 8 November 2017, Prof. Polrat Wilairatana, Director of the Hospital for Tropical Diseases welcomed Dr. Nazrul Islam, Dr. M.M Aktaruzzaman, Dr. Mosiqure Rahman, Dr. Abu Nayeem Mohammad Sohet, Dr. Shahid Talukdar and Dr. Nayammoy Tripura, doctors and health personnel from Bangladesh to the Hospital for Tropical Diseases and gave a special lecture on "severe malaria case management". This activity is a part of "The Malaria Elimination Sharing: Malaria Elimination Program, Bangladesh and Ministry of Public Health" during 6 - 11 November 2017 hosted by Department of Disease Control, Ministry of Public Health.

On 18 December 2017, the Faculty of Tropical Medicine, Mahidol University collaborates with Yoichi Hospital with the support of Department of Clinical Tropical Medicine and Office of International Cooperation and Networking co-organized "Short Course for Clinical and Laboratory Highlights in Tropical Medicine 2017" for 42 Japanese doctors, nurses, pharmacists and hospital personnel from Yoichi Hospital, Japan.

On 6 July 2017, the Faculty of Tropical Medicine, Mahidol University hosted "2nd Technology Seminar on the MinION Sequencing" to share new findings in Science, updates on molecular biology and One Health approach to tackle health problem.

On 31 August 2017, Dean Pratap Singhasivanon chaired 'Wai Khru' ceremony for academic year 2017. This ceremony gives students a good opportunity to show the gratitude to their teachers. On this occasion, Dean Pratap congratulated Assoc. Prof. Jaranit Kaewkungwal, Head, Department of Tropical Hygiene on winning Mahidol University's Outstanding Teacher Awards for academic year 2016 and also Asst. Prof. Saranath Lawpoolsri Niyom, Deputy Head, Department of Tropical Hygiene on being nominated for Epitome of FTM Lecturer by Faculty Council and followed by 'Tranakchit Harinasuta Award' ceremony for Master Degree student and Doctoral Degree student.

Three vivax research teams awarded MMV Project of the Year 2016

Prof. Elizabeth Winzeler (left), Dr. Jetsumon Sattabongkot Prachumsri (middle) and Dr. Brice Campo (right - standing in for Prof. Dennis Kyle)

Groundbreaking research is making it possible to screen compounds directly on the dormant liver stages of P. vivax for the first time

On 10 October 2017, at MMV's 14th Stakeholders' Meeting in Bali, three discovery teams led by Prof. Dennis Kyle, University of South Florida, Prof. Elizabeth Winzeler, University of California, and Dr. Jetsumon Sattabongkot Prachumsri, Mahidol University, Thailand, jointly received MMV's Project of the Year 2016. The award recognizes their impressive progress in developing new assay platforms to test compounds for activity against the dormant liver stages of malaria. These new assays are making it possible to screen and identify novel compounds that could prevent relapse and protect against Plasmodium vivax and Plasmodium ovale malaria.

The relapse of P. vivax malaria is the cause of a significant burden of disease – WHO estimates it causes around 8.5 million clinical infections every year.[1] Yet only one anti-relapse medicine, primaquine, is currently available with a second, tafenoquine, in the late stages of clinical development. Both these medicines increase the risk of hemolysis in a small percentage of patients, who have a deficiency in the enzyme glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase (on average 8% of people in malaria-endemic countries).[2]

Basic research on the biology of the relapse of P. vivax has historically lagged behind that for work on the blood stages of Plasmodium falciparum (the species of malaria responsible for the majority of deaths in Africa). This is partly because P. vivax parasites are difficult to access and maintain in laboratory assays, and partly because the dormancy occurs inside liver cells, adding extra complexity. Today, thanks to a Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and MMV-led global research strategy and these new assays, this is set to change.

"There is a huge unmet medical need for new medicines to stop the debilitating relapse of P. vivax malaria," said Dr. David Reddy, MMV's CEO. "Each episode keeps a child or adult from school or work for at least 3 days. This places a huge burden on countries and communities that can afford it least. These three research teams have made impressive strides towards helping meet this unmet need and are deserving recipients of MMV's Project of the Year 2016."

- Text and photo courtesy of Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV)

1. World Malaria Report 2016
2. G6PD Deficiency Prevalence and Estimates of Affected Populations in Malaria Endemic Countries: A Geostatistical Model-Based Map

Dr. Direk Limmathurotsakul earns RSTMH Emerging Leaders Award

At their Annual Meeting 13 September in London, the Trustees of the Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (RSTMH) awarded Dr. Direk Limmathurotsakul, Assistant Professor at Faculty of Tropical Medicine, Mahidol University, Head of Microbiology at MORU and Wellcome Trust Intermediate Fellow in Public Health and Tropical Medicine, its Emerging Leaders Award, which recognises significant contributions in leadership and service, including mentoring and other forms of capacity-building, to the fields of tropical medicine and global health by early-career investigators based in low and middle-income countries.

"I would like to thank my colleagues Susanna Dunachie (pictured) and Nick Day who nominated me and presented the citation at the meeting. I very much appreciate their kindness and support," said Dr. Direk at the Awards ceremony.

Recognised as a world expert on melioidosis, an infectious disease caused by Burkholderia pseudomallei, Dr. Direk has published more than 100 publications on melioidosis over the past decade and led a series of laboratory and clinical studies demonstrating for the first time that ingestion and inhalation are important infection routes for melioidosis in northeast Thailand.

Dr. Direk also developed the first evidence-based guidelines for the prevention of melioidosis for people living in endemic areas and published a landmark melioidosis paper, estimating the global burden of melioidosis, in Nature Microbiology 2016. A lead researcher in antimicrobial resistance in Southeast Asia, Dr. Direk's on-going research includes antibiotic use in animals, estimating the burden of antimicrobial-resistant infections in Southeast Asia, and identifying where resources are most needed to fight effectively against antimicrobial resistance in low and middle-income countries.

On 19 December 2017, Dean Pratap Singhasivanon and Administrative Board members, Assoc. Prof. Waranya Wongwit, Deputy Dean for Education, Dr. Amornrat Aroonnual, Deputy Dean for Student Affairs and Faculty Welfare and Asst. Prof. Usa Boonyuen, Assistant Dean participated in the Signing Ceremony and Opening Reception of Mahidol University – Osaka University Joint Campus at the Faculty of Science (Phayathai Campus), Mahidol University hosted by Mahidol University and welcomed by Emeritus Prof. Dr. Pornchai Matangkasombut, Former President of Mahidol University and Former Dean of the Faculty of Science, Mahidol University. On this special occasion, Osaka University Administrative Board members led by Prof. Genta Kawahara, Executive Vice President paid a visit to the Joint Laboratory at the Faculty of Science (Phayathai Campus), Mahidol University and the Mahidol-Osaka Center for Infectious Diseases (MOCID) and Center of Excellence for Antibody Research (CEAR) at the Faculty of Tropical Medicine, Mahidol University.

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