

1. Preface

The geographical area specifically covered by this publication includes the Indian subcontinent, Myanmar, Thailand, Lao PDR, Cambodia, Viet Nam, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, the Philippines and Indonesia (excluding the eastern islands and Irian Jaya) (Figure 1).

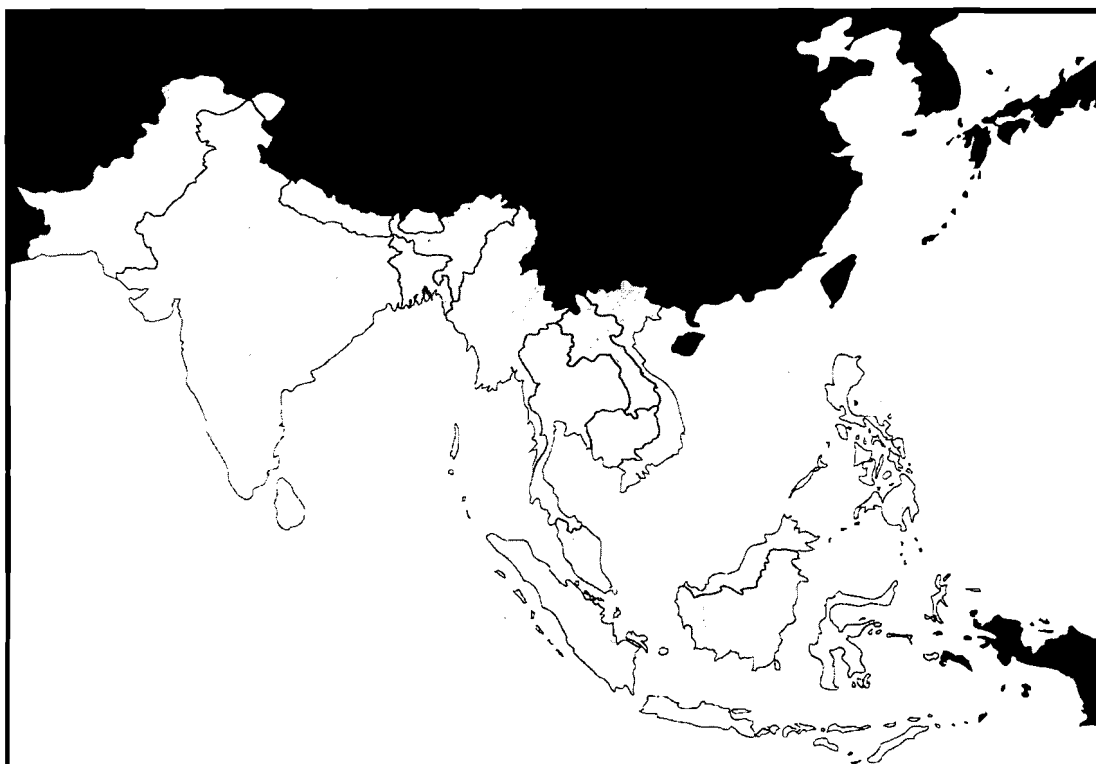


Figure 1 : Map of Asia showing the area specifically covered by these Guidelines.

In many parts of this region, snake bite is a familiar occupational hazard of farmers, plantation workers and herdsmen, resulting in tens of thousands of deaths each year and innumerable cases of chronic physical handicap. Much is now known about the species of venomous snakes responsible for these bites, the nature of their venoms and the clinical effects of envenoming in human patients. This publication aims to pass on a digest of this knowledge to medical doctors, nurses, dispensers and community health workers who have the responsibility for treating victims of snake bite.

The guidelines are intended to provide enough practical information to allow any medically-trained person to assess and treat a patient with snake bite at different levels of the health service. Recommendations are based on clinical experience and, where possible, on the results of clinical trials. The restrictions on the size of this document prevented the inclusion of detailed references to the original publications on which these recommendations were based. These can be found in the papers and reviews listed in "Further Reading".

Any recommendations must be continually reconsidered in the light of new evidence and experience. Comments from readers are welcomed so that future editions can be updated and improved.

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Miss Eunice Berry (Centre for Tropical Medicine, University of Oxford), typed the several drafts of the manuscript. Ms Vimolsri Panichyanon (Assistant Programme Coordinator, SEAMEO TROPMED Network) and Drs Suvanee Supavej and Parnpen Viriyavejakul (Deputy and Assistant Deans for International Relations, Faculty of Tropical Medicine, Mahidol University), under the overall direction of Professor Sornchai Looareesuwan, were responsible for organising the meeting of the international panel of experts in Bangkok on 29-30 November 1998.

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