

From The Editor

Diseases, Drugs and Dust

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According to data from the Epidemiology Division of the Ministry of Public Health, from 1 January to 20 June 2024, there were 186,900 reported flu cases resulting in 14 deaths in various regions of Thailand [1]. The first case of a new lethal variant of mpox, which the World Health Organization (WHO) termed a worldwide health crisis, was confirmed on Thailand on 21 August 2024. The affected person likely carrying the strain is a European visitor who traveled from Africa to Thailand. Although mpox has been known for decades, a new and more lethal strain known as Clade 1b has recently caused a surge in mpox cases resulting in deaths in about 3.6% of cases, with children being more susceptible, according to the WHO. Over the past few months, the surge has mainly been central to Africa with outbreaks reported in countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda. The Democratic Republic of Congo reported over 16,000 cases and 500 deaths from mpox this year alone. On 15 August 2024, the first case of the Clade 1 variant was confirmed outside Africa in Sweden and only 6 days later in Thailand [2].

Thailand's Ministry of Public Health has announced plans to reclassify cannabis and hemp as illegal narcotics starting 1 January 2025. Opponents of the move called for public demonstrations to protest the reclassification to keep cannabis accessible to the populace while proponents of the bill argued that the reclassification is necessary to prevent misuse and protect public health, ensuring that the plant's benefits are utilized responsibly and safely [3].

The need to protect children from the health risks associated with vaping was emphasized on 31 May, the World No Tobacco Day. According to the Southeast Asia Tobacco Control Alliance (SEATCA), five out of 10 countries in the region ban e-cigarettes. These include not only Thailand and Singapore, which have some of the strictest vaping bans in the world, but also places like Brunei, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. In Thailand, vaping has been prohibited since 2014. Possessing an e-cigarette could face fines of up to 30,000 baht in Thailand and up to 2,000 Singapore dollars in Singapore [4].

Thailand started Lung Cancer Screening (LCS) in the Regional Health-1 covering Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Lamphun, Lampang Nan, Phayao, and Mae Hong Son. The low-dose CT will be utilized as a screening tool and the target group includes smokers or those with family history of lung cancer aged 55-75 years old that reside in Regional Health-1 for more than 20 years. The reason to start LCS in Regional Health-1 is that there is a high prevalence of lung cancer and a high level of PM 2.5 which raise deep concerns to public that they might be related. This first organized LCS in Thailand was presented and discussed as well as recommendations, guidelines and protocols on other chest diseases among radiologists during 26-28 July 2024.



Panel discussion among the expert chest radiologists on 26 July 2024



Annual conference of chest radiology during 27-28 July 2024

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