

PRESS RELEASE

**“First GMS Forum
On Japanese Encephalitis/ Viral Encephalitis Prevention & Control”**
Hue City, Vietnam, 29-30 October, 2009



Photo: RCU

From 29-30 October 2009, in Hué City, Vietnam, over 40 experts from Cambodia, China, France, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Singapore, USA and Vietnam, representing their countries' various institutions¹ or International organizations² gathered to review the current status of Japanese Encephalitis and other Viral Encephalitis diseases, and to exchange and discuss future plans to fight the disease.

The event was organized by the Vietnam National Institute of Hygiene & Epidemiology (NIHE) and was co-sponsored by the Asian Development Bank Greater Mekong Subregion Communicable Disease Control project (ADB GMS CDC, through its Regional Coordination Unit) and the Surveillance and Investigation of Epidemics in Southeast Asia project (SISEA/Pasteur Institute).

During two intensive working days, experts reviewed the disease burden and all existing control and prevention initiatives in the region, followed by the approach in each individual country; their progresses, good practices, lessons learnt and issues.

¹ Such as the US CDC Center, the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the Japan National Institute of Infectious Diseases, the Nagasaki Institute of Tropical Medicine, the Nagasaki International Center for Collaborative Research, and the countries' respective ministries or health or their relevant institutions or departments such as National Institutes of Public Health or National Centers for Laboratory and Epidemiology, departments of Expanded Program on Immunization, Children Hospitals, or even private sector with the Company for Vaccine and Biological.

² such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Vaccine Institute (IVI), the Regional Emerging Diseases Intervention Center (REDI), Pasteur Institutes, the Asian Development Bank Greater Mekong Subregion Communicable Disease Control project (ADB GMS CDC) or the Surveillance and Investigation of Epidemics in Southeast Asia (SISEA).

Participants then reviewed all progresses made in the field of JE vaccines, discussed lessons learned from experience, and delivered subsequent recommendations.

They were then given updates on JE diagnosis tool kits, with an emphasis on Quality Assurance within the JE laboratory network and validation of JEV IgM assays. They reviewed other scientific and experimental progresses and new methods in JE diagnosis. They also discussed the development a new method for detection and identification of new encephalitis viruses and unknown viruses.

On the clinical aspects, scientists reviewed other pathogens of acute encephalitis syndrome, with all major etiology of encephalitis in the world. They were also given an update on infectious diseases of the nervous system and their impact in South East Asia.

At the closing, participants expressed great satisfaction for this opportunity to meet and share among JE-focused scientists and programme managers. It was reminded that this very debilitating disease may cause severe and irreversible sequelae with subsequent socio-economic implications. They voiced a strong desire to develop a regional strategy on JE, and establish as early as possible a special regional JE network. Report of the event will be posted on the ADB GMS CDC website (www.gms-cdc.org) shortly.

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