

e-ASIA Science Talk Luncheon
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in the Pacific Rim'
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Discussion Report

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1. What are the current 'hot topics' of research and their significance within your specialism?

There were 3 virologists at the dengue table. Prof Arunee Sabchareon from Thailand is a paediatrician with very long history of clinical trial research and deep involvement in dengue vaccine development. Prof CC King from Taiwan is an epidemiologist who has long worked in dengue and influenza.

These 3 participants have known each other for some years meeting at different conferences and seminars around the world.

The current hot topic in dengue is the question of the clinical significance of neutralizing antibodies and how to determine correlates of protection. This has become even more important since the failure of the dengue 2 component of the Sanofi Pasteur phase 2b trial recently completed in Ratchaburi.

2. Within the field of 'Infectious Diseases', what areas/diseases are prioritized by the countries represented at your discussion?

None of the participants considered that they represented their country. Malaysia for instance declares so many priorities in research to cater to the whole range of interests of researchers that it is not considered useful to name these. So the way we dealt with this question was to name what we considered to be important infectious diseases in our countries.

Taiwan: influenza and hepatitis B; dengue is only important in the south

Thailand: Dengue – 50 to 100K cases a year.

Malaysia: Dengue

3. In the countries represented at your discussion, what national or regional programs/initiatives/plans were mentioned that are relevant to research within your specialism?

In Thailand there is a strong emphasis with a number of different centres supported by the government – on dengue vaccine development. There is even a Thai company which has licensed a dengue vaccine developed by Prof Nopporn Sittisombut. Prof Sutee Yoksan also has a center for vaccine development in Salaya.

In Malaysia there are surveillance programmes ongoing, but this is limited to the Ministry of Health and there is very little cross ministry collaboration. Academic researchers are not very welcome in MOH activities in most states.

In Taiwan no mention was made of any initiatives in dengue.

4. What potential areas for multi-lateral research cooperation were identified between the countries represented at your discussion? What research areas within your specialism would benefit from multi-lateral joint research?

There were 2 areas mentioned for multilateral collaboration in dengue:

- a. Determination of correlates of protection for dengue and design of improved methods of testing for protective antibodies.
- b. Comparison of dengue illness and response to dengue infection between children, young adults and older individuals (dengue is seen mostly in these different age groups in the 3 countries represented in this discussion).