

Thai Health 2007

“The Scent of the Lamduan Flower”
Preparing for an Aging Society

Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University
Thai Health Promotion Foundation



14 Health Indicators
10 Health Issues

Cataloguing in Publication Data

Thai Health 2007 / Churnrurtai Kanchanachitra ... (et al.). - - 1 st ed. - -

Nakhon Pathom : Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University,
under the Health Information System Development Project of the Health System Research Institute,
supported by the Thai Health Promotion Foundation (Thai Health), 2007

(Publication / Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University ; no.329)

ISBN 978-974-11-0755-1

Researchers: Churnrurtai Kanchanachitra, Chai Podhisita, Kritaya Archavanitkul, Umaporn Pattaravanich,
Kullawee Siriratmongkon, Hathairat Seangdung, Suporn Jarassit.

Organizational Health Information System Development Project of the Thai Health Promotion Foundation
(Thai Health) 2007.

1. Health. 2. Aged. I. Churnrurthai Kanchanachitra. II. Chai Podhisita. III. Kritaya Archavanitkul.
IV. Umaporn Pattaravanich. V. Mahidol University. Institute for Population and Social Research.
VI. Thai Health Promotion Foundation. VII. Series.

RA776 T364 2007

(DNLM: 1. Health. 2. Aged. WA100 T364 2007)

Translator: John Bryant, Rita Litwiller, Ploychompoo Sukustit and Tippawan Witworrasakul

Cover Design: Nat Roengmongkol

Layout Designs: Nat Roengmongkol and Chutima Phuengsamran

Proof: The Thai Health Report Team

Graphics for Indicators Part: Kemmiko@hotmail.com

Pictures: Thannews Information Center, Matichon Information Center

Publisher: Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University
Thai Health Promotion Foundation

Printed: Amarin Printing and Publishing Ltd.

Frist published 2007 : 2,000 copies

Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University

999 Phuttamonthon Sai 4, Salaya, Phuttamonthon, Nakhon Pathom 73170, Thailand

Telephone +66 2 441 0201, +66 2 441 9666 ext. 300-304. Fax +66 2 441 9833

Email: directpr@mahidol.ac.th; website: <http://www.ipsr.mahidol.ac.th>

Thai Health Promotion Foundation (Thai Health)

979, SM Tower (Floor 34), Phaholyothin Road, Samsen, Phayathai

Bangkok 10400, Thailand. Telephone +66 2 298 0500. Fax +66 2 298 0501

Website: <http://www.thaihealth.or.th/en>

**Thai
Health
2007**

Preface

The 2007 issues of the Thai Health Report, like the previous three, takes a broad, multi-faceted view of health. The flower on the cover, lamduan, is the official symbol of elderly people in Thailand, and elderly people are this year's special topic. The reason for focusing the elderly is not, as some might guess, because the new government is composed mainly of elderly people. Instead, it reflects current trends in the Thai population. Thailand is slowly becoming an aging society. The proportion of the population aged 60 or over was 5.5% in 1980, 7.4% in 1990, and 9.5% in 2000.

How will population aging affect Thai society? Are elderly people a resource or a burden, or both? If they are a resource, do we recognize them as such, and are we using their skills efficiently? If they are a burden, have we prepared adequately for the future? The Thai Health Report contains a number of suggestions for how Thailand might get ready for an aging society.

The ten important health issues considered in the report include, for the third time now, conflict in the South. This conflict continues to affect the lives of people in the South and throughout Thailand. It is intractable and complex. Many different strategies for resolving the conflict have been tried and have failed. Violence in the southern border provinces features in the news every day, and even appears to be worsening. We can only hope that the various parties to the conflict will soon cooperate to find a solution.

Another important health issue is the government's decision to mandate production of three patented drugs. This story is still new, and we only just managed to include it before the Thai Health Report went to press. A complete list of the 10 important health issues in this year's report is: 1. Should the Government Keep the Two- and Three-Digit Lotteries? 2. From Chat Room to Video Clips and Camfrog: Getting to Know Online Life 3. The 'Facts about Medicine' Announcement: The Conflict between the Rights of Doctors and the Rights of Patients 4. Thai Children and Danger from Sex: More Protection Needed 5. Repeated Flooding: A Worsening Natural Disaster 6. The Fire in the South Continues after the Coup 7. Thai Students and Violence in Schools 8. The National Health Act: From Concept to

Implementation 9. Banning Alcohol Advertising; A Long Way to Go 10. Compulsory licensing of three drugs: Thai people's right to life is more important than profits

A new feature this year is a series of notes on positive health-related developments in Thai society. These are all things that Thais can be proud of. The list includes: 1. Innovative wheelchairs for disabled and elderly people 2. Progress in protecting Thais from bird flu 3. Work to develop a vaccine for dengue fever is almost finished 4. Thai students win an international competition to build a 'independent' robot.

The report includes 14 sets of indicators measuring important health trends. One subject addressed is second hand smoke at home, a health hazard that legislation is powerless to address, in spite of its harmful effects on children. Another is cardiovascular disease. Fully 60% of Thai adults have at least one risk factor for cardiovascular disease, though many people do not know they are at risk. A third subject is gambling by young people: one in three Thai young people gambles.

A complete list of the 14 indicators is: (1) dementia: an Epidemic on the horizon; (2) occupational health; (3) mental illness; (4) happiness; (5) risk factors for cardiovascular disease; (6) risk from secondhand smoke; (7) hazardous waste; (8) food supplements (9) consumer protection; (10) income, savings, and debt; (11) the sufficiency economy; (12) Thai young people gambling to get rich quick (13) Thai young people in the cyber age. (14) educational inequalities.

As societies grow, and as countries become more and more closely interlinked, social problems become more complex. Solutions to these problems accordingly require cooperation from many groups. The Thai Health Report aims to be useful to anyone involved in health. It draws attention to health problems that are often overlooked. It offers solutions or it provides information that might help in the search for solutions. Addressing health problems requires the participation of everyone, from all sections of society.

The Thai Health Report Team



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