

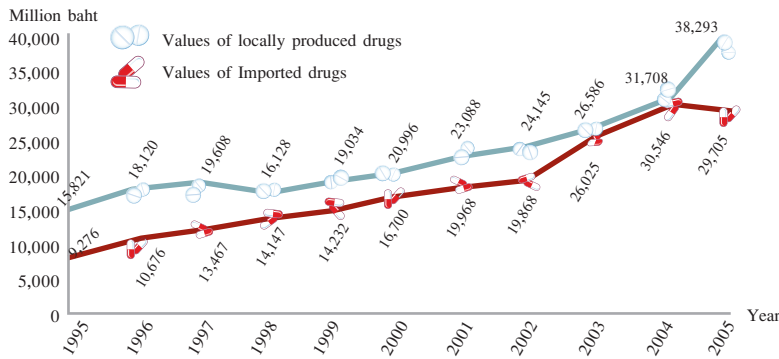
Medical Equipments and Technologies

Thailand is increasingly using medical technology. In 2005 15,799 million baht was spent on technologies for prevention and diagnosing diseases. However, access to medical technologies is only available in the capital city and in developed areas.

Medical technology includes medicines, medical supplies and medical equipment. There have been dramatic improvements in medical technology over time. The forces for improvement come from both the supply and the demand side. The demand side, or consumers of new technology such as service providers and patients want high quality, effective and rapid services. Due to the huge demand for medical technology, there has been a rapid advancement in technology and increasing utilization of the technology for therapeutic care and medication. The rapid growth in technology can be seen in the continuous increase in the production of modern and innovative drugs and medical equipment. These new drugs and medical equipment have been imported into the country at a rapid pace. As a result there are record numbers of expensive medical equipment such as computed tomography scanners (CT-scanners), magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), extracorporeal shock wave lithotripsy (ESWL) and Mammography.

Access to medical technology is a major challenge because modern and expensive technologies are highly concentrated in Bangkok, mainly at large, privately-owned hospitals. For instance, two-thirds of all MRIs are in Bangkok and two-thirds are owned by private hospitals. The CT-scanner is a cheaper and less-advanced technology. Only one-third of CT-scanners are located inside Bangkok and about 80 percent are privately owned. Consumers generally pay out of their own pockets to use privately-owned technologies. There are 2.2 CT-scanners per 1 million people in the Northeast region, but nearly 10 times as many per one million people in Bangkok. More expensive medical equipment is even more concentrated in Bangkok and in privately-owned large hospitals. This disparity in medical technology leads to major inequities in health care. The widespread availability of this expensive medical technology inevitably raises question about whether it is worthwhile for individual patients or the health system and society. The cost of services is expected to rise dramatically due to the introduction of new and expensive technology, which adds more burdens to consumers, individually and collectively. Decisions on whether to use new medical technology such as new vaccines and modern medical equipment should be based on sound evaluation, and whether the technology can reduce mortality, strengthen the quality of life for individuals and benefit society as a whole.

Price of modern medicines: Locally produced and imported, 1995-2005



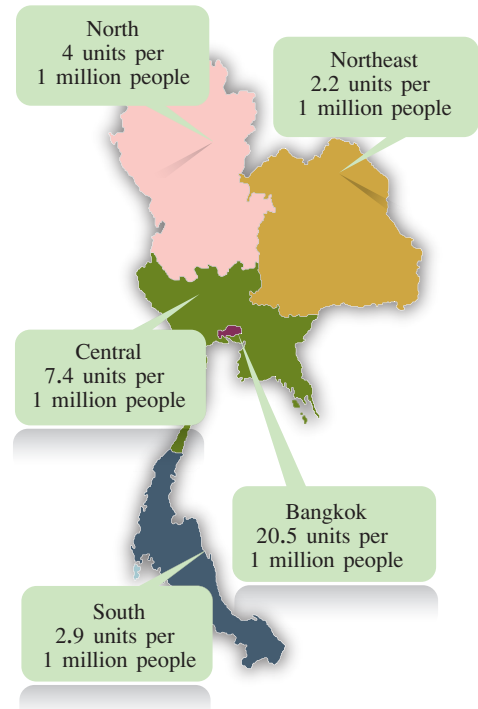
Source: Thailand Health Profile 2005-2007

Cost of medical equipment: Locally produced and imported, 1991-2005



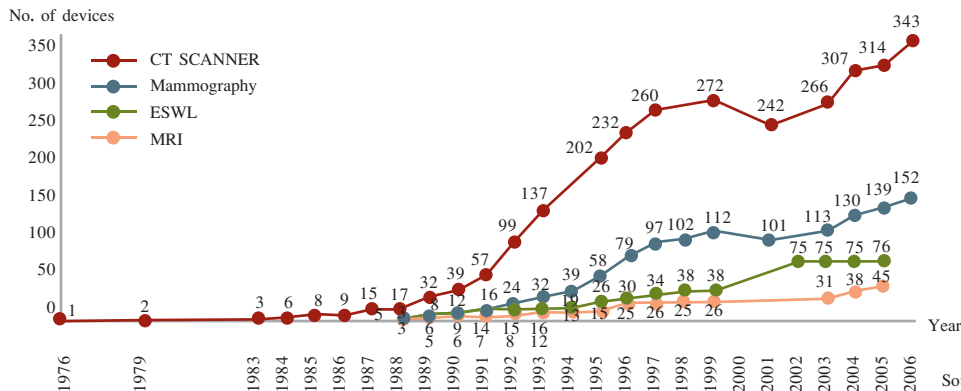
Source: Thailand Health Profile, 2005-2007

Number of CT scanner by region, 2006



Source: Thailand Health Profile, 2005-2007

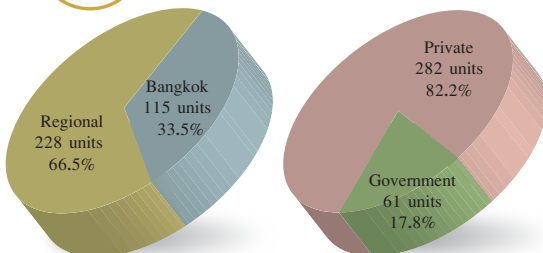
Number of selected medical equipment, 1976-2006



Source: Thailand Health Profile 2005-2007



Number of CT-scanner, 2006



Number of MRI, 2005

