

Report of “Education of Global Medical and Health Science Leaders in the Coming Generation in Cooperation and Collaboration with ASEAN Countries”

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1. Introduction

This report summarizes my experience of the exchange program during the session 2016 October 1st to November 30th in Mahidol University, Thailand.

By attending this program, I achieved my purposes to learn about public health, especially Thai older adults living in community.

2. Program overview

Participate term: October 1 2016～November 30 2016

City/Country: Bangkok/Thailand

Host university: Faculty of Public Health, Mahidol University

3. Studying in Thailand

3.1. Environment to promote health

1) Food habit

I was surprised because I can always find vegetables and fruits sold at low cost. However oily food, sugary sweets and drinks are more popular. For example, students love sugary coffee and sweets on their brake. When students and teachers have meeting, they eat sweets and sugary coffee. When I visited the Health Promotion Center, I found a lot of posters to promote change food habits like from fried omelets to boiled egg, sugar drinks to water, and so on. Thai people can choose healthy eating habits easily; however, it depends on individuals.

To promote healthful environment will be more necessary for Thai people. I found most people ordered vegetable dishes in Chinese festival, which people avoid

animal food to invoke and welcome the Nine Emperor Gods, from the respects of religious. Thai people also love new thing. I heard the coffee-brake culture started because of Star Bucks opened. So promoting new fashionable healthy culture will help easily to create healthful food habits.

2) Traffic jam

Many traffic jams occur every day causing air pollution and accident injuries and fatalities. World Health Organization (WHO) argues the risk of air pollution as health issue. The air pollution Bangkok reached critical levels because of urbanization. To improve prevention to air pollution, we need to promote to eliminate idling and use masks for motorcyclists, people who control traffic, homeless people, pedestrians, street vendors and their customers. Thailand also face road injury and deaths. Most passengers on motorcycles wear no helmet or protective gear. Most drivers don't stop for pedestrians. I wonder why police don't regulate traffic more strictly.

3.2. Education

1) Community nursing program

Undergraduate nursing students learned about community in Public Health Office (PHO). Nurses who belong to various sectors taught their own majors. Some of them told their experience and let students understand well. Students also visit PHO and community hospital. These lectures using senses like listening Nurse's talking, observing NS's movements, touching equipment and so on, help students to understand well.

Master course students focus on one community in their practice. First, they walked around, interview community members and map the community to assess local health problems. After that, they conduct health education and discuss solutions with community members. They can continuously build relationships with community members because they keep in contact and support them.

When I visited community with students, they enjoyed activity with community members and eating lunch together. The close relationships improve the effectiveness of health activities. The strength point of this fieldwork by students could benefit for the both of community members and students can benefit. Community members also can get knowledge to tackle health problem in the community from the students.

2) Collaborative research with International institutions

Mahidol University has many collaborations with international institutions. The University constantly invites professors from the other institutions to provide academic lectures and also dispatch many students to overseas universities every year. The students who join the exchange program must take lectures from native English teacher before study abroad. The libraries in the University have a lot of latest international journals from various majors. Students freely can read and borrow them. This learning environment might be help students gain international knowledge.

3.3. Aging and community health

1) Statement of older adults

I found three points about situation of Thai older adults through visiting and interviewing with community members. First, the reason why community members participate in senior clubs or community activities included following the King's philosophy, earning money, promoting health and so on. Second, families who live with older adults always take care of them and neighbors watch out them when they go out. Last, most of older adults find it difficult to join the activities because of limited mobility and hard working.

2) The key of social capital in communities

My research interest is the relationship between social capital and health of Thai older adults. Social capital is one of the key social resources and is considered to be a social determinant for developing health promotion.

I found four keys of social capital for older adults from the fieldwork. First, Buddhism and King's philosophy based on the community support. One of the Buddhist practices, tum boon, promote donation system such as funeral group and share equipment. Every month, community members pray in temple as a Buddhist day. It naturally promotes people to participate in the community activities and recognition of belonging to their community. King's philosophy addressed the importance of relationship between families and the community. These concepts improve the motivation to support others. Second, "Happiness" means to live with their family, keep active, earn by themselves, make friends and so on. To achieve these concepts, older

adults need to go outside, communicate with others and join the activities. It promotes them to access social networks in the community. Third, the relationships among neighbors are very close and easy to support. Neighbors know each other well. When older adults take a walk, neighbors keep a watch on them to prompt support them. Last, the motivate of local government affect directly. The motivation for community development is decreasing because of less cooperation between local government and community people. The well controlled of drag abuse related to safety of community.

3.4. Projects for community development

1) Royal project

The Royal Project has contributed to community development and public health. Former King Bhumibol had conducted more than 3000 Royal Projects to improve the lives of Thais and brought them a genuine and lasting happiness based on “Sufficiency Economy (sethakid phoo phiang)“. This project targeted seven categories: agriculture, environment, public health, employment promotion, water resources, communication and public welfare. The King visited each community including in both urban and rural area. He assessed the community problems and tackled them. Creating the economic foundation boosted the income of poor people. Improving infrastructure has decreased the risk of natural disasters. His ideas were explained at schools and passed down to posterity. It helps Thais well understanding “Sufficiency Economy” and public health well. Royal family has contributed to many aspects of public health.

2) One Tambon, One Product (OTOP)

OTOP helps community develop from economy aspects. OTOP is a local business stimulus program. It encourages village communities to improve the local products’ quality and marketing, selecting one superior product from each tambon to receive formal branding as its star OTOP product. Older people can earn money by themselves. It promotes active aging because older adults can participate in social activity as a worker. OTOP brings more income and promote activities in community.

4. Conclusion

My main purpose of participating was to learn about public health, especially health promotion of Thai older adults living in the community. I visited community and

interviewed with older adults. These experiences helped me deeply understand community health and aging.

Unfortunately, I experienced very sad events that King Bhumibol Adulyadej passed away 13 October 2016. I learned what he did for the Thais and understood the reason why Thai people loved King so much. Now Thais exhibited a deep sadness and obvious depression posing a serious health issue in Thailand. The Thai economy also faces uncertainly. On 1 December 2016, new king acceded to the throne. I hope the King's philosophy, such as unity, sustainability, and balance, will be educated continuously and promoted to next generation. I hope Thai people will recover from deep sadness.

Finally, I really appreciate everyone who supported in this program and me.

