

## Asia Region Networking Workshop on Schistosomiasis and Other Helminthic Zoonosis

The 19th annual Asian networking workshop on Schistosomiasis and other Helminthic Zoonosis (RNAS+) took place at DTU from November 14 to 15. Thirty foreign and fifteen Vietnamese scientists Vietnam shared their experiences and discussed their latest research.



*The organizers*

RNAS+ was established in 1998 to strengthen communication and cooperation between scientists and authorities involved in schistosomiasis research at a regional level, in China, the Philippines, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand, Myanmar, South Korea, Japan and Indonesia. Since 2005, the network has expanded to cover cysticercosis, clonorchiasis/opisthorchiasis, fascioliasis and other helminth zoonoses in Southeast Asia.

### **The 19th RNAS+ discussed:**

- Improving network control activities in Asia for schistosomiasis and other helminthic zoonoses

- Evaluating the current status of the diseases
- Sharing ideas on how to control and prevent them
- Offering training sessions on how to diagnose schistosomiasis and malaria



*Training on surveillance and control*

Doctor Somphou Sayasone, President of RNAS+, said: *“This annual workshop concentrates on exchanging and updating developments in surveillance and control, in order to finally eliminate these diseases. We also provide training for new researchers on various topics, on diagnostic techniques, geographic information systems, manuscript writing and on schistosomiasis and malaria in general, to broaden their outlook and skills. I would like to express my gratitude to DTU and especially to Associate Professor Nguyen Ngoc Minh, DTU Vice- Provost, for hosting us.”*

In two days, participants reported on the status of neglected tropical diseases (NTDs), such as Soil-transmitted Helminthiasis, Lymphatic filariasis, Schistosomiasis, Opisthorchis Viverrini, Yaws, Hansen, Clonorchiasis, Taeniasis and Toxocariasis in each of their countries over the past few years. They also identified challenges and problems associated with the introduction of more efficient control systems to improve performance and elimination progress and their action plans for 2020-2025.

**The most significant reports included:**

- “The current Status of Schistosomiasis Elimination in the Caribbean”, by Dr. Arve Lee Willingham
- “New immunological diagnostics in parasitic diseases”, by Dr. Deng Wangping
- “Information on a major intermediate host, the small liver fluke *Clonorchis sinensis*”, by Dr. Nguyen Manh Hung
- “An overview on the habitats of the *Oncomelania hupensis quadrasi* snail and preliminary results on the identification of risk areas for schistosomiasis japonica in the endemic and neighboring barangays of Gonzaga, Cagayan in the Philippines”, by Dr. Daria L. Manalo
- “Human infection from *Plasmodium Knowlesi* on the Vietnam-Laos border”, by Dr. Hoang Ha from DTU.

Dr. Ha’s interesting presentation highlighted the fact that malaria is one of the most serious health threats to ethnic minorities living in the Greater Mekong region of Southeast Asia, caused by infection of the *Plasmodium Falciparum* and *Plasmodium Vivax* parasites and, more recently, by the zoonotic *Plasmodium Knowlesi* parasite. This parasite poses a special challenge to malaria control programs, as it stems from zoonotic forest-dwelling macaque monkeys. Dr. Ha pointed out that nine cases of *P. Knowlesi* have been detected by PCR in nine blood samples taken in Laos and three in Vietnam. Both countries should continue to monitor the prevalence of *P. Knowlesi* and have control programs in place to combat it on both the sides of the border.

*(Media Center)*