

ThaiHealth's Alcohol Consumption Control

Background

Alcohol consumption is a leading cause of injury and disease in Thailand. Alcohol-related diseases are the third most important risk factor behind unsafe sex and tobacco consumption. Abuse of alcohol reduces productivity, consumes health service resources, and increases crime and violence. Economic loss due to traffic accidents alone are equivalent to 2-3% of the national GDP, or about 100 billion baht per annum.

The alcohol consumption rate among Thai population has been rapidly increasing. Annual per capita consumption in 1989 was 20.2 liters. By 2003 per capita consumption had risen to 58.0 liters. Thais have the fifth highest rate of alcohol consumption in the world. Although consumption of alcohol is particularly common among males, between 1996 and 2003 consumption among girls aged from 15-19 years rose almost six times.

Work by ThaiHealth helped persuade the cabinet to pass a resolution on 29 July 2003 to ban advertisements of all beverages with more than 0.5% alcohol on radio and TV broadcast between 5am and 10pm. The resolution included additional measures to control alcohol consumption and reduce traffic accidents, including the establishment of a National Committee for Alcohol Consumption Control, chaired by the Minister of Public Health.

Activities

1. Promote cooperation among groups working on alcohol policy

The National Committee for Alcohol Consumption Control is responsible for setting out policies and guidelines on the control of alcohol consumption, for improving coordination among relevant organizations, and enhancing implementation. ThaiHealth is responsible for coordinating the work of the three major subcommittees: the academic subcommittee, the subcommittee on campaign and public relations, and the subcommittee on legal provisions. ThaiHealth also organizes workshops to develop strategies for alcohol consumption control in Thailand

2. Support for effective legal enforcement

We will support the establishment of an enforcement surveillance center that will receive complaints from public regarding violations of alcohol control regulations. We will also assist other organizations in the enforcement of the regulations.

3. Support for research and evaluation

One major constraint in the alcohol consumption control campaign has been a lack of systematic research on the roles of alcohol in Thai society. A literature review by the Social Research Institute,

Chulalongkorn University, found 268 academic papers and reports, of which 77 were written in Thai. In addition, there are few academics, researchers, activists, administrators, and policy makers who are interested in alcohol consumption control. People working in this field have received insufficient support from their institutions.

ThaiHealth has therefore decided to support a proposal by the Health System Research Institute (HSRI) to establish a research center on alcohol consumption. This center will carry out the following activities:

- Compile and synthesize relevant information
- Conduct research on policy-relevant topics in a cost-effective way
- Develop a user-friendly database for monitoring alcohol consumption
- Disseminate information, in ways that suit the needs of the diverse audiences
- Provide advice to organizations working on alcohol issues

4. Provision of funding

ThaiHealth has funded activities carried out by alcohol control organizations in Thailand. For instance, it has paid for major advertising campaigns to reduce alcohol-related traffic accidents at Thai New Year, to encourage abstinence from alcohol during Buddhist Lent, to raise awareness about the links between alcohol and domestic violence, and to reduce the number of new drinkers. It has provided funding to replace sponsorship by the alcohol industry.

Budget

Item	Budget (million baht)		
	2005	2006	2007
Develop common aims among partners	15	15	15
Develop and campaign for public policy	20	20	20
Support state and private agencies involved in enforcement of regulations	25	25	25
Promote public campaigns	100	90	90
Develop and manage knowledge	30	30	30
Fund events that were formerly sponsored by the alcohol industry	120	120	120

Total	310	300	300
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Note - US\$1 equals approximately 40 baht