

# RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

## Healthy Tourism

Associate Professor Robyn Bushell from the Centre for Cultural Research and Associate Professor Brent Powis from the WHO Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health are investigating ways to promote the protection of tourists and locals from emerging infectious diseases (EIDs). The study is part of the project ASEAN Plus Three Initiative on Healthy Tourism (Association of Southeast Asian Nations plus China, Japan and the Republic of Korea) under the ASEAN Plus Three Emerging Infectious Diseases Programme funded by AusAID, the Australian Government's overseas aid program.

'With the current swine-flu outbreak having devastating effects on Mexico's tourism industry and the effects of SARS and Bird Flu in recent years, it is vital to protect both tourists and local host communities from EIDs,' says Associate Professor Bushell. 'In this study we are focussing on the Southeast Asian region where tourism is a key part of the regional economy with people visiting regularly from within Asia, Australia and other parts of the world. Effective communication using clear policy guidelines and publications is an essential key to avoiding the negative impacts of EIDs on the tourism industry. This project seeks to strengthen the partnership between the health and tourism sectors improving the accuracy and speed of information being communicated to all concerned.'

The researchers will collect information resources, standards and guidelines from one priority tourist destination in every ASEAN Member State and examine epidemiological data on travel-related illness as well as public health guidelines related to the spread of disease. Publications and guidelines for a healthy tourist experience will then be



developed and the findings and recommendations presented at a Joint Workshop of the ASEAN Ministries of Public Health and Tourism.

With global travel an everyday reality, it is important to provide people with well-researched up-to-date information on EIDs. This research will contribute to clearer procedures and guidelines being formulated which will enable appropriate action by ASEAN countries, reducing the health risks of travel to individuals and consequent damage to a country's tourism and economy.

**Project Title:** ASEAN Plus Three Initiative on Healthy Tourism

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