

For personal use only. Not to be reproduced without permission of the publisher (copyright@ppme.eu).

Asian activities in oncology pharmacy

The Asia for Safe Handling of Cytotoxic Drugs Interest Group aims to further develop guidelines and training for oncology pharmacists in the region.

Oncology pharmacy in Asian countries including Thailand really began to develop around 1996. The main focus was to enhance safety in the handling of cytotoxic drugs, which was mainly carried out by nursing staff. Initially some pharmacists in the region received training in Australia and the US in order to learn how to safely handle cytotoxic drugs. Since then the handling of cytotoxic drugs has become part of the growing responsibilities of pharmacy departments in Thailand. This has brought about new opportunities not just for professional career advancement, but also for collaboration among hospital pharmacists in Asian countries. This will undoubtedly help oncology pharmacy practice advance in the region.

The Asia for Safe Handling of Cytotoxic Drugs Interest Group was formed in 2004 in response to Asian pharmacists' concerns over the safe handling of cytotoxic drugs in their workplaces. Whilst in some places there may already be protocols, procedures or guidelines for safe handling, there was not a common platform in Asia to share experiences and 'best practices'. The intention of the Asia for Safe Handling Interest Group is to provide practical guidance for pharmacies, clinics and community settings. Therefore, guidelines have been developed by a panel of experts utilising data from published evidence or from accepted 'best practice'.

The highlights of the work and collaborations of the group are:

- An annual aseptic dispensary training programme held in Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand, which is designed also for pharmacy students.
- An exchange training programme for oncology pharmacists through grants provided by the Asia for Safe Handling Group of Cytotoxic Drugs Interest Group and others.
- The 1st Asia Pacific Oncology Pharmacy Congress, 3–5 August 2006 in Bangkok, Thailand, served as a platform for those in areas of oncology pharmacy sciences to get together



Kamonsak Reungjarearnrung
RPh

er to share recent developments and network with international colleagues, with the aim of improving cancer care through scientific research and evidence-based practice.

- The 2nd Asia Pacific Oncology Pharmacy Congress, 11–13 September 2008 was entitled 'Translating Evidence-based Medicine into Oncology Pharmacy Practice'. The congress focused on the practical application of evidence-based medicine and intended to highlight advancements in oncology to improve the quality of pharmaceutical care.

These events also acknowledged members who have made outstanding contributions to oncology pharmacy practice in this region.

Most Asian nations now have mandated that the handling of cytotoxic drugs is part of good practice in drug management systems and that the pharmacy department in the hospital is responsible. Therefore, practical guidance on the safe handling of cytotoxic medicines is a necessity. We have been working on the establishment of a residency training programme, as well as Board certification, research grants and scholarships, and also exchange training programmes, including those designed for pharmacy students.

The Asia for Safe Handling of Cytotoxic Drugs Interest Group is also working to support those countries, such as Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and the Philippines which need help in developing practice standards. We plan to review guidelines at regular intervals to ensure they reflect current knowledge and changes in health and safety legislation.

Author

Kamonsak Reungjarearnrung, RPh
Pharmacy Director
Bumrungrad International Hospital
33 Sukhumvit 3
Wattana, Bangkok 10110, Thailand
kamonsak@bumrungrad.com