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31 December 2004

Dear Health Care Professional,

Reminder note to medical carers for returned travelers
from tsunami affected areas Dec 2004

A strong earthquake occurred off the west coast of Northern Sumatra (Aceh) on 26 December 2004. A subsequent tsunami has hit South and Southeast Asia causing serious damage and loss of life. Several countries bordering the Indian Ocean have been affected including Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Maldives, India, Thailand, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Burma (Myanmar), and Somalia. Relief workers have been working hard to salvage lives and prevent infectious diseases outbreaks in the affected areas. Such areas are vulnerable due to hot and humid climate.

Medical carers are reminded to keep alert to the following categories of infectious disease in travellers or residents who returned from the affected areas.

1. Food and water borne diseases : Diarrhoeal diseases, including bacillary dysentery and cholera; enteric fever (typhoid); hepatitis A and E
2. Mosquito-borne infections: Malaria and dengue fever
3. Rodent and other animal associated diseases: Leptospirosis, plague, rabies (due to increased exposure to animal bites in unsheltered habitants)



In relation to the above mentioned infectious diseases, carers are reminded to note the followings in history and physical examination:

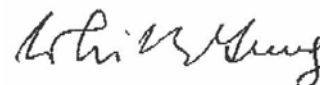
1. Date and place of travel
2. Fever
3. Diarrhoea
4. Rash
5. Jaundice
6. Respiratory symptoms
7. CNS symptoms
8. Other unusual symptoms

Onward travelers to the affected areas should be alerted to the possibility of contaminated water and food supplies in the affected areas. The following health advice applies:

- Consume only boiled or treated water
- Consume only thoroughly cooked food.
- Bring along mosquito repellants and wear long sleeved clothings.
- Bring along a list of emergency contact number (e.g., telephone numbers of local emergency numbers, airlines, hotels, tour guides, relatives and friends).
- Seek medical attention if unwell for any reason on return from the affected areas.

Finally, immunization against hepatitis A, typhoid fever, and tetanus may be considered for the traveler. Other immunizations (e.g. rabies) and anti-malarial prophylaxis may be considered as well depending on the specific itinerary and activities.

Yours faithfully,



(Dr. Raymond YUNG)

Head, Infection Control Branch
Centre for Health Protection