



GOOD PRACTICES in Responding to  
Emerging Infectious Diseases: Experiences from the

ASEAN  
Plus Three Countries



# Chapter 5: Malaysia

## Development of Infectious Diseases Outbreak Rapid Response Manual and Standard Operating Procedures for Potential Infectious Diseases Documents in Malaysia

*Lokman Hakim Sulaiman, Norhizan Ismail, Rosemawati Ariffin,  
Mariam Mohamad, Husnina Ibrahim, Devan Kurup, Zawani Zulkifli*

### 1. Introduction

Malaysia has faced many major disease outbreaks, including emerging infectious diseases in the past decade. For example in 1999, the novel Nipah encephalitis was first reported in Malaysia which resulted in 283 cases with 109 deaths. While in 2003, Malaysia also experienced the SARS outbreak. These outbreaks highlighted urgency for Malaysia to provide guidelines for management of infectious diseases for all health care levels. Hence, with the support of Ministry of Health (MOH), the Infectious Diseases Outbreak Rapid Response Manual was developed in 2003 and followed by the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for Potential Infectious Diseases in the following year.

### 2. Rationale for the Development of the Manual and SOP

In view of high turnover rate of personnel as well as for the benefit of the new personnel, the documents were produced to ensure the practice of systematic surveillance and control of infectious diseases and outbreaks. These documents served as references for all MOH personnel in preparedness and planning for any unusual events occurring at their localities or at any setting.

### 3. Process Involved in Developing the Manual and SOP

The documents were developed by taking into consideration of the centralized organizational structure of health care in MOH. The scope of these documents are intended to be action-based and within the jurisdiction of the MOH.

The secretariat for development of these documents was the Infectious Diseases Surveillance Section under the Disease Control Division, MOH. This mandate was in line with roles and functions of the section for surveillance of infectious diseases.

The secretariat was responsible for coordinating the production of these documents. Their main duties are:

- (1) to identify editors, contributors and experts in the relevant fields;
- (2) to draft the contents of the documents;
- (3) to organize and facilitate meetings and workshops and
- (4) to prepare documentation.



GOOD PRACTICES in Responding to  
Emerging Infectious Diseases: Experiences from the  
ASEAN  
Plus Three Countries

## Chapter 5: Malaysia

The Editorial Board was also appointed through the secretariat with defined responsibilities to ensure consistency and context relevancy of the documents. The Board edited all the documents and validated opinions/inputs from the various contributors and experts.

### 4. Content of the Manual and SOP Documents

As detection and response to infectious disease outbreaks require multidisciplinary cooperation and collaboration of various health professionals, these documents were designed to cover all aspects of managing outbreaks in a practical manners and within a standardized/organized framework.

Following are the outlines of the Manual and SOP:

#### 4.1 Infectious Diseases Outbreak Rapid Response Manual

- (1) Introduction, Objectives
- (2) Outbreak Preparedness
  - (2.1) Rapid Assessment Team (RAT) and Rapid Response Team (RRT)
    - Membership, roles and functions of the teams
    - Flow chart and activation of teams
- (3) Laboratory Preparedness
- (4) Clinical Resources
- (5) Stockpiles of Critical Materials
- (6) Surveillance and Alert
  - (6.1) Definition and Objectives
  - (6.2) Infectious Disease Surveillance Systems in Malaysia
  - (6.3) Alert Mechanism and Initial Evaluation of Potential Outbreaks
  - (6.4) Outbreak Detection
- (7) Management of Outbreak
- (8) Risk Communication
- (9) Occupational Health and Safety for Health Care Workers
- (10) Criteria for Recommending the Invoking of "National Directive No. 20" Issued by the National Security Council
- (11) Training
- (12) Funding
- (13) Appendices

GOOD PRACTICES in Responding to  
Emerging Infectious Diseases: Experiences from the

**ASEAN**  
Plus Three Countries

### 4.2 SOP For Potential Infectious Diseases

- (1) Surveillance of Infectious Disease Outbreak
- (2) Operations Room during Infectious Disease Outbreak
- (3) Infection Control During Outbreak
- (4) Risk Communication

### 5. Lessons Learned and Recommendations

The SOP and manual documents provide guidance for the field workers as well as for the managers in managing outbreaks. These documents offer standardized and systematic framework applicable at national, state and district levels. The SOP and manual are flexible and the health care worker can utilize it according to their needs and resource capacity. These documents have been provided for the field personnel and have been well accepted by them as invaluable references.

Since these documents were prepared shortly after the SARS episode, the contents were actually based on our real experiences in handling the situation which had major socio-economics impact on the country. The documents cover all angles of outbreak management, including surveillance, rapid response, laboratory and stockpiling preparedness, operations room setup and infection control.

The MOH Malaysia operates on a centralized administrative system with wide service coverage throughout the country. With this hierarchical system, standardized compliance of the districts and states in controlling infectious diseases outbreaks can be ensured.

As these are flexible documents, regular updates and reviews of them are necessary from time to time. Thus, evaluation of these documents in view of its practicability and relevancy should be performed regularly by the coordinating secretariat or the relevant units in the Disease Control Division, MOH Malaysia. Our current documents are due for evaluation.