

Southeast Asia and Western Pacific Bi-Regional Field Epidemiology Training Program COVID-19 Online Conference Welcome Message

Dear Colleagues,

It is my great honor to welcome you all to the Southeast Asia and Western Pacific Bi-Regional Field Epidemiology Training Program COVID-19 Online Conference.

With COVID-19 still spreading in communities around the world, I regret that the 2020 FETP conference, originally planned to be an in-person conference in Taipei, had to be moved online. However, this also reflects the world has ingenuity, flexibility, and resilience in facing the pandemic.

The world changed, literally overnight, when COVID-19 cases were reported on December 31, 2019. Field epidemiology training programs around the globe sprang into action to detect, investigate, and respond to the pandemic. Each program has responded slightly differently, because our respective communities have different disease spread patterns, different public health and healthcare systems, and the general public has different experiences with emerging diseases.

Because of Taiwan's experience during the SARS outbreak in 2003, we have had early success in COVID-19 response and have been touted as an example of such. However, I am reminded time and time again that our success was only achieved through the collaboration of all the people on this island, who reported cases, who were quarantined or isolated, and who complied with our disease prevention measures. I am humbled by the solidarity shown by our citizens.

Other countries in our region have had successes in responding to much larger outbreaks of COVID-19, which are even more difficult to control.

This conference serves as a good platform for us to share our strategies and experiences, as we head into the next phase of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Finally, I would like to thank you for your participation, and I wish you a successful conference.

Sincerely,

Shih-Chung Chen, DDS
Minister
Ministry of Health and Welfare
Taiwan

