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# The role of the Asia-Pacific advisory committee on influenza

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Committee<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract.** In recent years it has become clear that a coordinated approach to the promotion of influenza awareness, with the intent to improve the prevention and control of influenza, is needed in the Asia-Pacific region. The APACI was established in early 2002 to address issues relating to influenza and the impact of the disease in Asia. Its members include influenza researchers, and public health and infectious disease experts from countries in the Asia-Pacific region. The committee is a joint initiative of key opinion leaders in the region, supported by four pharmaceutical companies: Aventis Pasteur, Chiron, GlaxoSmithKline and Wyeth. The activities of the APACI are aligned with, and supplemental to, those of the World Health Organization (WHO) for the global control of influenza. The APACI intends to work in cooperation with the WHO to complement its work on influenza surveillance and promote influenza awareness throughout Asia. © 2004 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

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## 1. Mission statement

To promote influenza awareness in the Asia-Pacific region, with the intent to improve the prevention and control of influenza.

## 2. Objectives

- (1) To identify and develop activities that complement the WHO Global Agenda on Influenza Surveillance and Control.
- (2) To assist the development of country-specific public awareness programmes.
- (3) To promote influenza awareness among healthcare professionals in the region.

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- (4) To provide educational resources to support influenza awareness activities.
- (5) To assist the process of establishing or reviewing country-specific recommendations for influenza prevention and control.
- (6) To facilitate the timely access to, and supply of, influenza vaccines.

### 3. Activities

Activities will include:

- promoting influenza awareness among healthcare professionals in the region:
  - identifying country-specific Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs)
  - a regular newsletter (*Influenza—Asian Focus*)
  - peer-reviewed publications (develop publication plan)
- providing educational resources to support influenza awareness activities:
  - healthcare professional’s resource package
  - case management guidelines
  - speaker’s kit
  - Continuing Medical Education programme
- assisting the process of establishing or reviewing country-specific recommendations for influenza prevention and control:
  - to establish a list of existing recommendations
  - to evaluate international recommendations in the Asia-Pacific context
  - to facilitate development of consensus statements and information exchange
- assisting the development of country-specific public awareness programmes:
  - identifying country-specific requirements
  - developing a strategy to increase country-specific public awareness
  - media kit
  - media training for KOLs
- identifying and developing activities that complement the WHO Global Agenda on Influenza Surveillance and Control.

### 4. Achievements to date

- *Influenza—Asian Focus* newsletter (3 issues)
- Development of consensus statement—Influenza immunisation in a SARS environment
- Developing a CME programme – Influenza slide resource kit
- Two poster presentations at the International Conference on Options for the Control of Influenza V, Okinawa, Japan, 7–11 October 2003
- Abstract on diagnostic algorithms for respiratory viruses submitted to the 6th Asia-Pacific Congress of Medical Virology, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 7–10 December 2003 (poster presentation)
- Commenced collation of publication materials for influenza information database.

### 5. Upcoming projects

- APACI website—providing influenza-related information for the general public, primary healthcare physicians and infectious disease specialists; framework established

- CME case studies to be available on website
- Proposed influenza-like illnesses (ILI) abstract for WONCA 2004 (17th World Conference of Family Doctors), Orlando, Florida, USA, 13–17 October 2004
- Consensus statement – influenza vaccination in paediatrics
- Development of a publication entitled *Influenza in SARS*—highlighting the importance of influenza surveillance and control in the era of possible re-emergence of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in the region.

## 6. Apaci meeting highlights

The APACI inaugural meeting was held in Hong Kong in January 2002. The Committee focused on how to meet the objectives raised, and members from Hong Kong, Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines and Thailand presented data on influenza in their respective countries.

The 2nd APACI meeting was held in Bangkok in June 2002. Dr. Klaus Stohr of the WHO Influenza Programme discussed recent developments of the WHO global agenda on influenza and its possible impact in Asia. Influenza data from Singapore, Taiwan, Korea and China were presented, and country-specific consensus statements on antiviral usage were discussed.

The 3rd APACI meeting was held in Kuala Lumpur in October 2002. The committee discussed future plans for the development of an APACI website that would provide healthcare professionals with influenza information on the Asia-Pacific region. Data were also presented from the Korean National Influenza Committee, which is working to improve influenza surveillance and control, and to increase the usage of influenza vaccine among the elderly in Korea.

The 4th APACI meeting was held in Singapore in June 2003. The Committee discussed the development of the WHO's global agenda on influenza surveillance and control and its expected impact on influenza management in the Asia-Pacific region. Information was provided on programmes addressing the public awareness of influenza in Thailand, the Philippines, Australia, New Zealand and Taiwan, and data were presented on the use of influenza antiviral agents in the Asia-Pacific region. Issues regarding the SARS outbreak were discussed, specifically its implications for the activities of the APACI. Particular emphasis was placed on approaches to laboratory diagnosis of SARS and understanding the stages of disease progression.

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