

EDITORIAL

Foreword to men's health in Asia: special issue of *Asian Journal of Andrology*

Asian Journal of Andrology (2011) 13, 511; doi:10.1038/aja.2010.138

Disease burden, risk factors for cardiometabolic diseases, life expectancies and health-related adjusted life expectancies vary greatly in Asian countries. The marked difference in socioeconomic status, cultural practices and health-care services further compound these discrepancies. As such, men's health status, men's health promotion, education as well as men's health care differ markedly in different parts of Asia.¹

Many of the advanced tiger economies of North and East Asia are wealthy and have achieved high socioeconomic status and health-care services, and health insurance is well developed. These countries also share many common cultural backgrounds which influence their attitude to health, health-seeking and disease treatment behaviors. Deep-rooted cultural practices are influenced by strong belief in long-standing traditional medicine which has an impact on both preventive and treatment-seeking health care among the general population.^{2,3}

The developing countries of South and South-East Asia also have their respective folk medical practices, but their overall health care is better determined by the countries' less developed socioeconomic environment. Overall, all of Asian countries share a common daunting phenomenon of population aging which imminently appears to have dire consequences on the economic development and escalating health-care cost.

The immediate goals of all Asian governments are to maintain productivity, and ensure good economic development and health status of their graying population. In this respect, there is tremendous urgency to improve men's health status and to prolong the working lifespan of men, as in all Asian countries, men still dominate the economies.

There is an urgent call for men's health promotion and education. Effective measures and programs to drastically bring about healthy lifestyle adjustment will certainly add another 10 years of health-adjusted and working lifespan. Even the most advanced Asian economies like Japan, Singapore, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Chinese

Mainland (costal region) can benefit by stringently controlling tobacco and alcohol consumption, and promoting good physical activities, dietary habits and mental health.

This special issue on men's health in Asia reveals the many varied facets of men's health in Asia. It covers many unique features of Asian men's health and sexual practices including traditional medical practices, prostate cancer which is rapidly gaining importance among the Asian men, testosterone deficiency and testosterone treatment trend in Asian practices.

I hope that this special issue help provide an awakening call to all stakeholders in the field of men's health. I believe that the medical community will rise to meet and engage the challenges of tackling men's health crisis in Asia. We need to urgently embark on much translational research to help solve many aspects of men's health problems. The future of Asian economies and the overall development of Asian diverse societies and culture greatly depend on the health of Asian aging male population.

Hui Meng Tan^{1,2}

¹Medical and Education Development Department, Faculty of Medicine,
University of Malaya Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

²Sime Darby Medical Centre, Subang Jaya, Malaysia
(perandro@streamyx.com)

1 Tan HM. Men's health research in Asia—current and future direction. *Jpn J Sex Med* 2008; **23**: 65–6.

2 Tong SF, Ho C, Tan HM. Managing aging male in Asia: a review. *Int J Urol* 2011; **18**: 32–42.

3 Tan HM, Low WY, Wong LP, Sugita M, Ishii N *et al*. Traditional medicine in ED—comparison between the attitudes towards TCM of Malaysian and Japanese men with ED: findings of the Asian men's attitudes to life events and sexuality (Asian MALES) study. *J Sex Med* 2008; **5**: 252–3.