



# Taiwan Health in the GLOBE

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Infield testing of the chlorine level in tap water by Taiwan Emergency Medical Mission for Sao Tome and Principe, the cholera epidemic area.

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Dr. Samba (middle), the former director of WHO Africa Region, received an acknowledged honor for outstanding devotion to global health from Taiwan's former Minister C. J. Chen on 2005 Global Forum for Health Leaders.

### Personal Perspective: Dr. Ebrahim Malick Samba in the 2005 Global Forum for Health Leaders

**Dr. Ebrahim Malick SAMBA is the former WHO (World Health Organization) Regional Director for Africa.**

**He is now a private citizen of the Republic of Gambia. He was trained as a medical officer and as a surgeon in the United Kingdom. He worked as a doctor in the United Kingdom for some years, before joining the public service in his country, where he has worked in various capacities for 20 years. He subsequently joined the W.H.O. for which he worked in various capacities for 25 years. He is now retired from service. We met him during the Global Forum of Health Leader held at Grand Hotel, from November 28 to December 3, 2005, in Taipei, Taiwan.**

**Dr. Sidi Coulibaly (S. C.) is the editor of the Globe, a medical doctor of Burkina Faso and working on his thesis in Taiwan since 2004.**

**Q:** Sidi Coulibaly (S. C.): What are the strength and Weakness of 3 by 5?

**A:** Dr. Ebrahim Malick SAMBA :  
**The strength of 3 by 5:**

It's definitely increased the awareness, no doubt at all, it's increased the advocating all over the world, and as consequences, funding has increased. All technical support like pharmaceutical companies have reduced their drugs prices, some of them have given free drugs.

**The Weakness:**

The major weakness is that the 3 by 5 has not achieved to the satisfaction of the people in need, which was the expectation. It's waked up appetite! It made people really feel up, here is a solution to our problems, and it came very slowly and not enough. Some people are disappointed and this has been a weakness, in term of money, in term of availability of drugs, in term of human resources, because our medical systems are weak. We don't have enough doctors, enough nurses, enough laboratories and laboratories technicians, etc.

And for 3 by 5 you need to test the people, their agents amongst others. This is the weakness. It's really waked up tremendous demand, but has not been able to satisfy it. But certainly it has achieved something.

**Q:** S. C.: What are your feeling and expectation about Taiwan future in regard to being a member of WHO as a simple observer or a full member state?

**A:** Dr. Ebrahim Malick SAMBA :

Well, I am very hopeful; it is not going to be quick, because there are good reasons. WHO doesn't decide who is a member, and who is not! That is decided in New York. Once the decision is taken that you're a member state, and then WHO can invite you, but WHO. must invite you. For example, I remember when I first went to WHO in 1974, there were only few African states; Ghana, Liberia and Ethiopia. That's all. But now, all the countries of Africa are members of WHO.

**Q:** S.C: What are the prospects?

**A:** Dr. Ebrahim Malick SAMBA :

The prospects are good, but it will take time.

Meanwhile, like I said when I made the presentation on IHR, and on HIV/AIDS, you don't have to be a member state; you can be a NGO, an individual, et cetera. By force of your effectiveness, of your performance, you will be recognized for what you are. So, I was to advise Taiwan, I will say continue what they're doing, invite these important people for these meetings. If they (Taiwan) do it again, do it in Africa, do it in Ghana, do it in Malawi, and do it in Gambia

and so on. In time, Taiwan will be recognized, as a major contributor of global health by WHO. So my advice to this country (Taiwan) is to do something which will make it valuable.

**Q:** S.C: What is your general impression?

**A:** Dr. Ebrahim Malick SAMBA :

My impression is very positive and very optimistic, because Taiwan really has tremendous resources and people are good.

### Personal Prospective:

#### Dr. Ho, Mei-Sha, the top infectious epidemiologist on Taiwan's challenges in the Global fight against avian influenza pandemic

reported by Edward A. Goka

Dr. Ho, Mei-Sha is an Associate research fellow at the Academia Sinica in the Department of Biomedical Sciences. She is one of the leading Infectious epidemiologists in Taiwan. She got her B.S. from Purdue University then an M.D. from Indiana University School of Medicine and as an exchange student at the Cambridge University School of Medicine, and did her intern, residency in Internal Medicine and fellowship at the Los Angeles County/University of Southern California Medical Center. She got her M.P.H. from the Harvard School of Public Health.

She has received several awards, the Chiron Biocine Award being one of them. Dr. Ho has worked as a scientist for the special task force for the National Vaccine Policy at the National Institute of Preventive Medicine; as a medical epidemiologist at the Division of Viral Diseases and epidemic intelligence officer, Centre for Infectious Diseases, CDC, Atlanta, USA. She also worked as a visiting scientist of the National Science Council and a temporary consultant in World Health Organization. She also is an Adjunct Associate Professor Department of Public Health College of Medicine National Taiwan University and the National Yang-Ming University.

She is a honorary member of the Infectious Disease Society, a committee member of the Advisory Committee for Infectious disease

Control; a committee member of the Advisory Committee for Immunization Practice and advisor of the National Institute of Preventive Medicine.

Dr. Ho has been serving as a consultant on Public Health issues i.e. Epidemiology for the Department of Health and the Taiwan Centre for Disease Control (CDC) officially and unofficially since 1989, usually when they have outbreaks. Three notable involvements include:

In 1993 there were 12 sudden infant deaths, which were associated with DPT vaccination. I was involved in investigating and it was finally found that the deaths were not related to DPT.

In 1998 there was an enterovirus 71 outbreak in Taiwan in which 78 children died of respiratory failure and 400 children died of encephalitis. The outbreak has been recurring yearly since then. I was involved in putting a surveillance system in place, as well as laboratory diagnosis.

In 2003, there was an outbreak of SARS in Taiwan. I was called to become one of a team of 19 experts who were meeting everyday to formulate and recommend to the Government strategies on how to control this new disease, which nobody had knowledge about at the time. An example of a major challenge was how to handle an average of 10,000 travelers entering the country each day. During the two

weeks when the SARS outbreak was at its peak, I was on assignment in China, sent by the Government to study the progression of the disease there.

I was and still feel depressed disappointed about this. I feel I could have done something to change the course of events.

About Taiwan's preparedness to a possible avian influenza outbreak, Dr. Ho thinks though Taiwan had had cases of H5N2 among migrating birds in Guandu. She is however lucky because so far she has never had any human cases. She is of the opinion, that Taiwan's domestic surveillance system among poultry and humans; preparation for hospital infection control practices; communication/educational policies and practices concerning avian influenza and vaccination issues are all adequate. For example, each year over 10,000 samples are sent to surveillance laboratories, resulting in about 2,000 isolations.

Turning to the Globe, Dr. Ho however feel that the world is not prepared for an avian influenza outbreak. There are no quick identification/diagnosis and reporting/case surveillance systems especially in developing countries, like in African countries. This is despite



Dr. Ho, Mei-Sha, the top infections diseases epidemiologist in Taiwan.

the fact that migrating birds fly to Africa from Europe when it is winter in Europe, hence posing a danger of an outbreak in Africa. And also despite the fact that in anticipation of the large numbers of cases which do go along with influenza outbreaks, other resources are scant and the world has only early detection as a weapon against this disease.

H5N1 is presently considered the most likely Influenza virus to ignite the next Influenza pandemic. The increasing spread and evolution of H5N1 viruses in Asia have brought the world closer to another pandemic than at any time since 1968, when the last of the previous century's three pandemics began. WHO, through its network of specialized influenza laboratories, has constantly monitored the evolution of the H5N1 virus since its initial infection of humans in Hong Kong in 1997. If a pandemic has to be avoided, there is need for all countries in the world to work closely and in an organized manner so as to avoid wasting of resources through duplication of efforts. Taiwan has always been a champion is Global health activities, and has to defiantly get actively involved in the fight against this very important threat to human life. Dr. Ho is of the opinion that so far the Taiwan government has actively contributed toward the global fight against avian influenza. For example the government donated Tamiflu to Vietnam, and has sent mid-level technical people to places with cases. However she feels that the government's involvement has not been fitted into the global organization network. And therefore recommended that government should put more effort into working with African countries through international agencies.



The 23<sup>rd</sup> Quadrennial Congress of international Council of Nurse, Taipei, 2005.

## Establish Global Partnership

### Training Program for Senior Nursing Leaders Completed Successfully

The DOH and Taiwan Nurses Association jointly held the 2005 training program for senior nursing leaders to enhance professional cooperation and communication between the health institutes in Taiwan and other nations. The Taiwan Nurses Association is one of the 126 members of the International Council of Nurses. It has just held the 23<sup>rd</sup> Quadrennial Congress of the International Council of Nurses. More than 4,000 professional nurses from 148 nations took part in the congress. According to the survey done by the ICN, the satisfaction rate

among guests participating in this year's event is as high as 100%. This event is highly regarded and recognized by nurses from around the world. ■

### International Health Leaders and Outstanding Experts Participate in The 2005 Global Health Leaders Forum in Taiwan

The "Global Forum for Health Leaders" was held in November 2005 in Taiwan. The forum discussed many major health issues in the world, such as how to make use of the newly revised International Health Regulations to jointly prevent the outbreak of bird

flu, how to effectively implement the newly passed "Framework Convention on Tobacco Control," how can medically advanced nations provide better treatment and medications to less



President Chen Shui-Bian of Taiwan attended the ICN opening ceremony.



2005 Global Forum for Health Leaders declared Doctors' manifesto in tobacco control.

advanced nations in an effort to overcome the challenges of AIDS prevention, and how to reach a balanced development in health among nations in the world with the advancement of globalization. About three hundred important health leaders and famous professionals from more than fifty nations and international organizations gave their thoughts at the forum. Participants include Dr. Ferid Murad, Nobel Prize winner in medicine and Dr. Max Essex, Chair of the Harvard AIDS Institute and many others. ■

### Taiwan Takes the Initiative to Establish Sister Hospital Relationships and Promote Exchanges

The Department of Health actively carries out overseas medical assistance by commissioning the Chia Yi Christian Hospital to form a volunteer overseas medical team based on the spirit that medical service transcends national borders. The team has been providing overseas medical services in Manila since October 2005. Their objectives include establishing a sister hospital relationship with Sorsogon State



Ceremony of establishing friendship/sister relationships between Chia-Yi Hospital, Taiwan and Sor-sogon State Hospital, Philippine.

Hospital in the Philippines, visiting local facilities, offering free medical services and helping local medical and nursing staff to receive training in Taiwan. During this time, they taught local citizens the correct treatment in case of diabetes, stomach and intestinal disorders and dental problems. ■

### New President of World Medical Association Calls on Nations Around the World to Support Taiwan's Bid to Join WHO

New President of the World Medical Association, Dr Kgosile LETLAPE, expressed his support for Taiwan's bid to join the WHO at his Inaugural

Presidential Address at the 2005 WMA General Assembly. Here is the excerpt from his address: In the East we currently have an outbreak of avian flu. You will remember that in 2003 the world endured the SARS epidemic, where hundreds of patients died in China, Taiwan, Singapore and Canada. At this time, the WMA argued strongly for the establishment of a global surveillance and response network, which would include front line physicians. In addition, the WMA called for Taiwan to be included in WHO surveillance and response networks, as they are a separate health entity, not receiving any funding or assistance from China. Here we are in 2005, with avian flu posing as a possible disaster the like of which we have not seen since the Spanish Flu epidemic in 1918, when millions died. Yet, we don't have a fully functional network where physicians and medical associations are directly linked to WHO. The gap in the global public health network, Taiwan, a country with 23 million citizens, has not been addressed yet. If avian flu is transmitted from China to Taiwan, as had happened with SARS, there are still no formal channels open



Taiwan Emergency Medical Mission worked in the cholera epidemic area of Sao Tome and Principe.

between WHO and Taiwan to exchange technical data and provide help. Clearly, we need to be more vocal and active as social leaders to make sure that all measures can be taken to include all the peoples of the world in preparing for health disasters. ■

### Taiwan Helps Sao Tome and Principe to Fight Against Cholera

Sao Tome and Principe experienced a serious outbreak of cholera in October 2005. As soon as being informed by Health Minister of Sao Tome, Taiwan formed a team for cholera control in Sao Tome. Now, the epidemic of cholera is under control, the number of clinical patients has been reduced, wards for cholera patients have been arranged, and there is sufficient medicine for treatment. It is the first time we held a medical assistance team made of exporters from different sections, including Department of Health, Environmental Protection Administration and International Cooperation and Development Fund. The team also helped them to set up equipment for clear water. Sao Tome and Principe officials, nationals and medias are impressed by the

assistance from Taiwan. ■

### Asia Pacific Health Forum

The Department of Health held the "2005 Asia Pacific Health Forum" in November 2005. Asia Pacific Academic Consortium for Public Health (APACPH) serves as a forum for academic exchange of epidemiology and public health. It has a history of over twenty years. Since Taiwan has experience in SARS prevention, and in the fields of public health, we were able to hold the conference this year. The topic of the 2005 conference was, "Health Security in Emerging Disaster in the Asia Pacific." Recent catastrophes caused by natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis and typhoons around the world have aroused the attention of many nations in Asia Pacific and Austronesian nations. These nations have started to pay attention to the importance of emergency disaster relief and public health contingency systems. Consequently, participants in the forum also discussed many other topics including an

investigation of the health of tribes in Taiwan and Austronesian nations, tobacco control and traditional medicine. Participants in this forum also included public health scholars and government officials from Japan, Korea, Singapore, Australia and the US. ■

### Attending APEC Workshop for HIV/AIDS in Migrants

The APEC Health Task Force (ATF) conducted a workshop on HIV/AIDS and migrant/mobile workers in Makati City, Philippines on Dec. 5~6th, 2005. Dr. Dong-Fu Shang (DOH), Dr. Dau-Yaung Lu (DOH) and Mr. Shih-Yan Yang (CDC) represented DOH, Taiwan in the meeting. Other than official representatives, International Labor Union, NGOs concerning migrants' rights and experts also attended, numbering more than 60. Taiwan is one of the few migrant worker recipient countries present, and our presence was well noted. During discussion, our representatives mentioned the latest efforts within Taiwan on the welfare of migrant workers, their inclusion into the National Health Insurance system, special shelters, and the newly inaugurated international hospital for contract workers. Many experts expressed approval and congratulations, and wished we could attend similar international meetings to share our experience and policies toward migrant workers. The consensus reached in this workshop will be forwarded to the first senior officials' meeting for APEC next year. ■



The opening ceremony of 37th APACPH Conference & 2005 Asia Pacific Health Forum in Taipei.

# Frontiers in Medical Development

## Organ Transplant Patients in Taiwan Enjoy High Survival Rate

According to statistics from the Bureau of National Health Insurance, a total of 1352 cases of organ transplants were covered by national health insurance between 2001 and 2004. Comparing the survival rate of organ transplant patients in Taiwan with the statistics from the "United Network for Organ Sharing" (UNOS), the survival rate of Taiwan's kidney transplant patients is similar to that of American patients. In terms of liver transplants, the survival rate of liver transplant patients in Taiwan is as high as that of American patients. The three-year survival rate in Taiwan is even higher than that in the US. In order to improve medical quality and prolong the life expectancy of Taiwan nationals, surgical costs of kidney and heart transplants have been covered by the national health insurance since 1995. The surgical costs of liver and lung transplants have been covered since 1998. ■

## Taiwan's National Health Insurance System Recognized by Krugman

Paul Krugman, professor at Princeton University and columnist of New York Times, proposed at his New York Times column on November 7, 2005, that the US should learn from Taiwan's national health insurance system. His opinion showcases the merit of

## The New York Times

Monday, November 7, 2005

Taiwan, which moved 10 years ago from a U.S.-style system to a Canadian-style single-payer system, offers an object lesson in the economic advantages of universal coverage. In 1995 less than 60 percent of Taiwan's residents had health insurance; by 2001 the number was 97 percent.

Taiwan's national health insurance system and its value to the people. Krugman points out that in the ten years after the national health insurance system was introduced on the island, Taiwan has changed from a society with only 59% coverage to one where almost all residents enjoy health insurance. Despite this, increases in overall health care spending have been minimal. Krugman used the title, "Pride, Prejudice, Insurance" to ask his fellow Americans to overcome the pride "America has nothing to learn from other countries", and forgo the prejudice "driven by ideology, that

private insurance is more efficient than public insurance." ■

## Bone Marrow Donation Meets Enthusiastic Participation in Taiwan

The Tzu Chi Bone Marrow and Stem Cell Research Center of the Tzu Chin Foundation in Taiwan celebrated with other bone marrow centers around the world 10 million entries in the international bone marrow and cord blood online matching database. The Tzu Chi Foundation indicated that around 280,000 entries in this data are from Taiwan. In other words, in every one hundred international volunteer donors, 2.8 of them are Taiwanese. Taiwan is indeed a country full of considerate people. The Tzu Chi Foundation further pointed out that the Bone Marrow Donors Worldwide (BMDW) has so far contained 57 bone marrow databanks from 42 nations, and 38 cord blood databanks from 20 nations. ■



The Symposium of Bone Marrow Stem Cell Transplantation Medicine.

# Prevention and Control of Pandemic Avian Influenza

## Explanation of Taiwan's Application to Produce Tamiflu with Special Permission

In an effort to stockpile sufficient antiviral drugs for at least 10% of all population, the Department of Health has instructed the National

Health Research Institutes to conduct research and make sure that we are capable of producing Oseltamivir in addition to purchasing Tamiflu from

Roche. In response to the threat brought by bird flu, DOH has undergone three rounds of negotiations with Roche, yet, no consensus was reached. Ultimately, the Intellectual Property Office of the Ministry of Economic Affairs ruled on November 25 concerning the Tamiflu coercive authorization that the DOH was granted the right to produce Tamiflu under some conditions from now until December 31, 2007. ■



### Taiwan Will Have the First Flu Vaccines Manufacturing Fab in 2008

The priority of the global influenza pandemic preparedness program has shifted from medication preparation to vaccine storage recently. We have completed the planning of "Invitation to the Private Sector for the Application of the BOO Project to Self-produce Flu Vaccines." It is scheduled that a vaccine fab capable of producing 16 million doses of vaccines will be set up by the end of 2008. It is going to be the first influenza vaccine fab to produce vaccines targeting local virus strains in Taiwan. ■

### Taiwan Donates 600,000 Tablets of Tamiflu to Vietnam

Taiwan donated 600,000 tablets of Tamiflu to Vietnam to fight against avian flu. Nguyen VanBinh, Deputy Director of Preventive Medicine Department under the Ministry of Health pointed out that these antiviral drugs donated by Taiwan would be distributed to people living at cities and states, which were severely hit by avian flu. Nguyen VanBinh expressed that Vietnam also planned to import another batch of 70,000 tablets of Tamiflu. The total cost for these drugs is approximately US\$189,000. They are waiting for the government to approve the budget at present. ■

## Events and Announcement

### 2006 International Hospital Federation Asian Pacific Regional Conference

Many important topics will be covered, for example, the applications of information technology, which appropriately applied has great potential in medicine, nursing and management. The topics mentioned above and much more will be discussed at the conference and there will be space given in the program for dialogue and debate. We are looking forward to see you in Taiwan in April 2006.

Time: April 2 to 5, 2006

Venue: Taipei International Convention Center, Taipei, Taiwan 1, Hsin-Yi Rd., Sec. 5, Taipei 110, Taiwan

Or Visit: [www.ihftaiwan2006.org](http://www.ihftaiwan2006.org)

### 28<sup>th</sup> World Congress of International Medicine / Taiwan Society of Internal Medicine

We have been designated the theme as "Internal Medicine in IT (Information Technology) Era", from medical research, education, clinical service, as well as various subspecialties, geriatric, medical ethics, neurology, critical care and emergency medicine for the congress. We cordially invite you to join the congress.

Time: November 10 to 14, 2006

Venue: 22F-26, No.50, Sec. 1, Jong Shiao West Road, Taipei 100, Taiwan

Or Visit: <http://www.icim2006-taipei.org.tw/>

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