

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND RURAL URBAN DIFFERENCES IN TOBACCO RELATED KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES*

Buppha Sirirassamee	Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University, Thailand E-mail: prbsr@mahidol.ac.th
M Siahpush	The Cancer Council Victoria, Cancer Control Research Institute, Australia
R Borland	The Cancer Council Victoria, Cancer Control Research Institute, Australia
D Young	The Cancer Council Victoria, Cancer Control Research Institute, Australia
D Hammond	Department of Psychology, University of Waterloo, Canada
F Kin	National Poison Centre University Sains Malaysia
M Omar	National Poison Centre, Universiti Sains Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

It is widely assumed (certainly by us) that less well educated, less well off people will have lower levels of knowledge than their better off peers. In countries where many country people remain subsistence farmers and education is less available, coming from a rural area is likely to be another indication of reduced access to knowledge generated from outside. Finally, use of locally produced, non-branded roll your own tobacco is believed to be more common in rural areas. Without access to health warnings on manufactured cigarettes, again knowledge may be compromised. This paper reports on differences in knowledge about tobacco and its harms and related attitudes in Malaysia and Thailand. The results of the study, much to our surprise show few meaningful differences. Roll-your-own cigarette smokers unsurprisingly have lower levels of awareness of health warnings on manufactured cigarette packs, however the extent of the difference is surprisingly small. Further, this difference does not translate into lower awareness of the health effects warned about (at least for the ones we assessed). Indeed knowledge about such things as smoking causing lung cancer, causing stroke, and impotence did not differ by SES, rurality or RYO use, but did differ markedly by country, with the knowledge highest where the specific knowledge had been disseminated—either via pack warnings or other programs. The implications of their findings are discussed, both proximally for tobacco control effects in Malaysia and Thailand, and more generally in how we think about disadvantage.

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