

DERMATOLOGICAL CONDITIONS OF TRAVELERS RETURNING TO THAILAND FROM TRAVEL ABROAD: A PROSPECTIVE STUDY

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Abstract. Dermatological problems are among the most common travel health risks. A prospective observational study was conducted among Thai travelers attending the Travel Clinic, Hospital for Tropical Diseases, Mahidol University, Thailand during February 2018 to January 2019 and who intended to remain abroad for less than two months to determine spectrum, risk factors and impact of skin problems encountered during their travel. Pre-travel information and previous knowledge of travel-related skin problems were obtained based on a questionnaire, and another questionnaire was conducted on Days 7 and 14 post-return via either telephone or Line application. Those experiencing dermatological problems were evaluated on the impact of their conditions using a Thai version of dermatology life quality index (DLQI). Mean age of participants ($n = 270$) was 39 years old, most common destination was Asia (37%) with median duration of stay abroad of 11 days (range of 2-54 days). Although the majority participants had a good level of knowledge regarding potential travel-related skin problems, 24% of participants developed skin problems during their trip, most common being dry skin (10%), arthropod bite (3%), sunburn (2%) and eczema (2%), 50% of whom reported impaired (from small to moderate/severe) quality of life according to DLQI assessment. Multivariate analysis shows outdoor activity without protection against sun exposure and stay >14 days in Europe/North America/Australia/New Zealand were independent factors associated with skin problems. In order to raise awareness of potential dermatological problems while traveling abroad and encourage appropriate cautionary behavior, pre-travel counseling on risks and preventive measures is recommended for all Thai international travelers.

Keywords: dermatological problem, international traveler, risk behavior, preventive measure, Thai traveler

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