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International transmission of monkeypox: A view from Southeast Asia

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Monkeypox is a viral zoonosis that is transmitted from animals to humans caused by an orthopoxvirus[1]. In Europe, North America, Australia, and Asia, monkeypox has become a major public health hazard. The first few cases of monkeypox in Europe (2021) were linked to the tourists from Nigeria where the disease was endemic. But, the confirmed cases in the UK in May 2022 were men who have sex with men (MSM) and none of them had a history to international travle to countries where the disease commonly occurs. The clinical and epidemiological research is conducted to determine the mechanism of infection. World Health Organization has labeled the virus outbreak a glabal health emergency and called for multi-country response and collaboration among countries on treatments and vaccines.

Taking the lessons learned from COVID-19 into account, the disease screening at the international port is the key to prevent the transmission which includes both transit and immigration. In the instance of COVID-19, the diagnosis of diseases is a significant issue while traveling. The disease is typically detected when the immigration has been completed and the patient has stayed in the country for a while before the illness could be identified. The specific cases discovered in the transit unit could demonstrate the necessity for disease screening on international travel routes at all points, including the emigration, immigration, and transit units[2–4].

Immigration control is a crucial concern in any nation given the current monkeypox outbreak. Thailand reported the first case of monkeypox which was a transit passenger travelling form Europe to Australia who stopped over at an international airport in Bangkok for two hours. A total of eight cases of monkeypox have been documented in Australia as of June 15, 2022, and two of those cases passed the transit from airports in Southeast Asia.

Currently, a significant concern for global health control is the prevention of diseases in transportation. The previous researches showed that considerable transmission for monkeypox might happen even before seeing the syptoms in a person. The asymptomatic monkeypox infection may be a primary cause for an monkeypox outbreak in non-endemic countries which poses a challenge to detection and may go unnoticed throughout transportation. At present the majority of disease screenings at airports are based on scanning for fever. In some cases, however, there was no symptoms of fever and the rash might appear in a concealed place (such as the breast or genitalia), making exit and entry screening challenging.

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