

Respiratory Medicine

An Asian Perspective

Edited by

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Preface

The publication of this book *Respiratory Disease: An Asian Perspective* is most timely even though its inception has been several years earlier. The emergence of Severe Acute Respiratory Disease Syndrome (SARS) in 2003 and Avian flu in 2004 with the possibility of a pandemic has focused international attention on health care in Asia.

Respiratory specialists working in Asia have always noted that respiratory diseases in Asia are different in many aspects from other parts of the world. Unlike Western countries, the prevalence of cigarette smoking in Asian populations is rising, thus leading to increasing prevalence of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and incidence of lung cancer. Densely populated urban areas predispose to infectious diseases that are spread by droplets or air-borne route such as the long-standing plague of tuberculosis. The close interface between human and animals in southern China has led to newly erupted viral outbreaks in recent years. Rapid changes in lifestyles in some countries have resulted in rising prevalence of obesity and obstructive sleep apnea. Urbanization and industrialization with air pollution pave the way for acute exacerbations of chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases. Changes in environmental factors are believed to account for the rising prevalence of asthma seen in many Asian countries. Furthermore, the standard of health care delivery for respiratory diseases varies widely in different

parts of Asia. While advanced health care systems are in place in some cities, many regions still have limited access to health care.

Against this background, we felt that it would be useful and relevant to put together our collective knowledge and experience to share with those practicing in the region and also around the world. With population migration, diseases prevalent in Asia are no longer just confined to the continent; and with modern air travel, infectious respiratory disease, such as SARS, can reach other parts of the world within days.

In recent years, the ability to access information on relevant epidemiology and management in various parts of Asia is maturing, such that reasonably accurate data can be elaborated in this book. The insight and availability of such information are only possible from authors of this book, who have high professional standing in the respective community and have contributed their wealth of experience and knowledge.

Finally, we wish to express our gratitude to our respective families whose understanding and encouragement have made this book possible. We also wish to thank our colleagues and trainees whose insightful and stimulating questions have taught us not to be complacent. We wish to dedicate this book to young healthcare professionals working in Asia, on whom we pin our hopes for better health care in our communities in the future.

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