

PVRI
**South East
Asia
Task Force
Report
2020**

The Impact of Covid-19 on SEA Pulmonary Hypertension Centres...

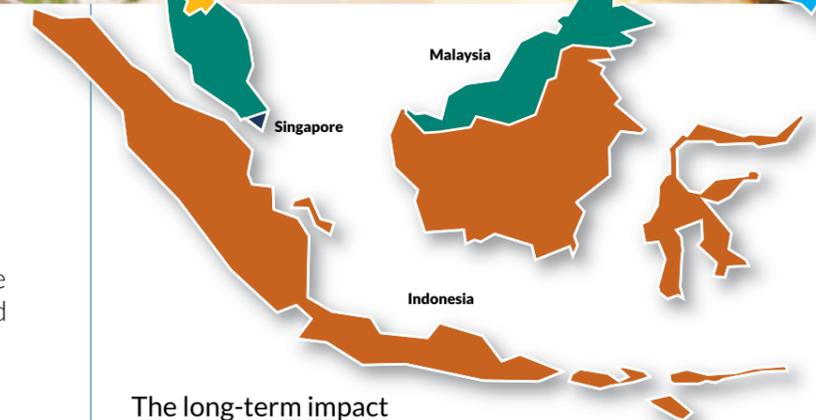
Report by James Yip, Tan Ju Le & Lim Yinghao

During the Covid-19 pandemic, we surveyed pulmonary hypertension centres across South East Asia from 1-31 October to evaluate how physicians and patients with pulmonary arterial hypertension (PAH) were coping with the crisis.

- **24 pulmonary hypertension specialists were surveyed from five countries.** These included: Thailand (4, 16.7%), Singapore (9, 37.5%), Malaysia (4, 16.7%), Indonesia (2, 8.3%), and Taiwan (5, 20.8%). 76% of these physicians were caring for more than 25 patients with PAH. Of note, only three PAH patients developed Covid-19. There were no deaths amongst these three attributable to Covid-19. 91.7% of surveyed doctors related no excess deaths in their patients when compared to the same time the previous year, however 8.3% related an increase in deaths.
- **The Task Force was interested to examine difficulties in delivering care during this period.** 70.8% of respondents cited patients' fear of coming to hospital, 25.0% cited that diagnostic tests such as echocardiography and catheterisation labs were diverted to patients with other chronic diseases, 20.8% cited supply chain issues for PAH medications and routine vaccines, 16.7% cited prioritisation of care for Covid-19 patients over PAH patients. Only 4.2% of respondents said that lack of Covid-19 testing ability was an issue. None had issues with lack of personal protective equipment.
- **With regard to how PAH patients were coping,** 72.0% of respondents said patients had issues with fear and anxiety, 60.0% reported issues with social isolation, 36.0% reported issues with travel restrictions for healthcare, 32.0% reported issues with depression, 28.0% reported difficulty procuring PAH medication, and 8.0% reported issues with procurement of masks for personal protection.
- **On a reassuring note,** when asked to rank how optimistic patients were for PAH treatment (10 being high) after the pandemic was over, they gave an average score of 7.
- **It is the opinion of the authors of this report** that patients and centres caring for patients with PAH in South East Asia seem to have done well during the Covid-19 pandemic. The majority



of the countries surveyed in this poll have had a low death rate from Covid-19 (Taiwan 0.3 cases/million population, Thailand 0.8/million population, Singapore 5/million population, Malaysia 8/million population, Indonesia 52/million population), and hence the better outcomes. In general, the incidence of PH patients developing Covid-19 remained unchanged in most studies (2.1 cases per 1000 in the United States of America). Some of the centres in our survey have turned to telemedicine to improve access of care but supply chain issues and prioritisation of resources in favour of Covid-19 and other chronic diseases remain an issue.



The long-term impact to our patients during this pandemic in terms of mental well-being cannot be understated but the optimism of our PH caregivers is encouraging.

