

## **Characteristics and health problems among last-minute and non-last-minute travelers: A prospective study from Thailand**

Natapon Jongsoowiwatwong<sup>1</sup>, Gerard T Flaherty<sup>2,3,4</sup>, Phimphan Pisutsan<sup>1,5</sup>, Wasin Matsee<sup>1,5</sup>, Teera Kusolsuk<sup>6</sup>, Udomsak Silachamroon<sup>1</sup>, Watcharapong Piyaphanee<sup>1,5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Clinical Tropical medicine, Faculty of Tropical Medicine, Mahidol University, Bangkok, Thailand, <sup>2</sup> School of Medicine, University of Galway, Galway, Ireland, <sup>3</sup> School of Medicine, International Medical University, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, <sup>4</sup> Travel Medicine Research Unit, Department of Clinical Tropical Medicine, Faculty of Tropical Medicine, Mahidol University, Bangkok, Thailand, <sup>5</sup> Thai Travel Clinic, Hospital for Tropical Diseases, Faculty of Tropical Medicine, Mahidol University, Bangkok, Thailand, <sup>6</sup> Department of Helminthology, Faculty of Tropical Medicine, Mahidol University, Bangkok, Thailand

### Background:

Last-minute travelers (LMTs) may face more risk while traveling due to limited time for preparation. However, there are insufficient scientific data to prove this assumption.

### Methods:

During pre-travel consultation at the Thai Travel Clinic, Thai travelers were invited to participate. They were asked about their demographic data, itineraries and were categorized as either LMTs (if departure date  $\leq$  14 days) or non-LMTs. Online questionnaires were administered to assess travel-related illnesses, either upon their return or at the one month point if their trip exceeded a month.

### Results:

Between July 2023 and January 2024, 408 Thai travelers were enrolled. The majority (68.4%) were female, overall median age was 39.7 years and mean trip duration was 28.9 days. Among all participants, 35.8% were LMTs, while 64.2% were non-LMTs. There were no significant differences in age, gender, and duration of stay between these two groups. LMTs had much less time for preparation than non-LMTs (7.9vs55.7 days,  $p < 0.001$ ). Out of 393 who responded to follow-up questionnaires, 106(26.9%) reported health problems. There was no statistical significance between health problems among LMTs and non-LMTs. However, LMTs reported higher rates of gastrointestinal and neurological symptoms.

### Conclusion:

Over a third of travelers visiting our clinic were LMTs. Although LMTs had less preparation time, their morbidity profile was not different to that of non-LMTs. However, some specific health problems were more likely to be reported among LMTs. Further research should investigate differences in travel health behavior in this population.