

The National Institute of Parasitic Diseases, Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention: a new administrative structure for schistosomiasis control

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Abstract

Since more than 5 decades, the overall responsibility for the national programme on schistosomiasis control in China resides at the government level, i.e. Ministry of Health. Day-to-day activities are carried out by independent provincial parasitic institutes situated in the endemic areas. Along with the general economic development and the steady progress in the medical sciences, successful developments in control and research of the parasitic diseases in the country were achieved. This necessitated a corresponding reorganization of the administrative structures which has taken place at several levels. In January 2002, the Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention was reorganized and the Institute of Parasitic Diseases in Shanghai became part of this new organization under the name of the National Institute of Parasitic Diseases to better reflect its new role. By assigning all administrative tasks regarding research and control of parasitic diseases under the umbrella of one administrative central laboratory, the new task force for epidemiological surveys and direction of parasitic control programmes is well suited to respond to the daunting challenges of the future. The new institution has only existed for a few years but has already become a well-functioning force with a broad contact net of national and international experts on research and control of parasitic diseases. © 2005 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

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1. Introduction

The Institute of Parasitic Diseases (IPD) can be traced back to its precursor, the East China Branch (ECB) of the National Institute of Health, established

in Nanjing in November 1950 (ECB, 1951). The institute got its current name in 1956 and was then part of the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences (CAMS). The following year, the new IPD was merged with the Hainan Anti-Malaria Station (CAMS) and moved to Shanghai where it focused on the main parasitic diseases at that time, namely malaria and schistosomiasis (IPD, 1957). There were no major administrative changes for the next 25 years but in 1983, IPD

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was affiliated with the Chinese Academy of Preventive Medicine (CAPM) and started to develop in different directions. In 1992, IPD became the base of the Key Laboratory for Parasite and Vector Biology under the Ministry of Health (MOH) and in 1996, the Chinese National Center of Systematic Medical Malacology was established. IPD has developed international links and was designated a WHO Collaborative Centre for Malaria, Schistosomiasis and Filariasis by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1980 and a Tropical Medical Research Center by the US National Institutes of Health (NIH) in 1996. The responsibilities were thus steadily growing, making IPD a key laboratory for many different diseases and organisms in China and the larger sub-region.

The increasing national and international programmes and projects that had become the responsibility of IPD made the administration cumbersome and shortly after entering the new millennium, it was decided to streamline the various activities into a more smoothly running structure.

2. China CDC: a new centre for disease control and prevention

The reorganization of the infrastructures dealing with disease control in China was carried out according to two main themes, one purely administrative and the other technical. All institutions with responsibility for disease control and prevention in various regions of the country were linked together in a system based on their national, provincial, prefecture and county level. The highest administrative body is occupied by the newly created Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, China CDC for short. The institutions can exchange information but must report to China CDC according to a strict administrative procedure. In this way, a network of institutions for disease control and prevention was created which can execute disease control in their areas of expertise and according to their geographical location.

China CDC is a non-profit institution at the national level working in 18 different fields of disease control and prevention, public health management and provision of service. It has its headquarters based in Beijing. The 18 professional institutes, centers and offices affiliated with China CDC are responsible for

control and research of diseases that are of public health importance. They thus implement disease control and research on important communicable and non-communicable diseases and manage public health issues for food safety, occupational health, health-related product safety, radiation health, environmental health and health care for women and children. These institutions conduct applied scientific research on their own and are also engaged in a number of activities, such as:

- strengthening research on strategies and measures for disease control and prevention;
- organizing and implementing control and prevention plans for different kinds of diseases;
- providing technical guidance, staff training and quality control for disease control and prevention and public health services throughout the country;
- establishing national working groups for disease prevention, emergency relief and construction of public health information systems.

3. The new IPD structure

IPD is located in Shanghai where it currently has a total staff of 180 persons. Among them, there are 121 professionals, 42 of whom are senior scientists. Academic reviews and consultations are the responsibility of the academic board, which is chaired by the director of the institute and a scientific committee consisting of 16 experts of high academic level, renowned for honesty and good morals. As IPD developed, new departments were added in an organic way to fill perceived and real needs. In order to create a more transparent and better functioning structure, the institute was reorganized around a set of disease-oriented departments with four foci, namely (i) schistosomiasis, (ii) malaria, (iii) filariasis, kala-azar and hydatidosis and (iv) soil-transmitted and food-borne parasitic diseases, as shown in Fig. 1.

Along these specialty departments, five cross-sectorial departments, laboratories and centres at the same administrative level were established, namely (i) Department of Drug Development, (ii) Key Laboratory of Parasite and Vector Biology, (iii) Department of Novel Technology, (iv) Centre for Detection and Consultation of Health Education and (v)

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