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Letter to the Editor

Basic resuscitation training and public-access defibrillator deployment in Buddhist temples of Thailand



To the Editor,

Efficient deploying public-access automated external defibrillators (AEDs) requires appropriate selection of places to avoid mismatch between AED placement and occurrence of out-of-hospital cardiac arrest.¹ Usually selected places are where many people gather and risk factors exist: for example, airports (long time flight) and sports facilities (stress to hearts).^{2–4} Such places differ from country to country due to different life-style and behaviors.³

In Thailand, Buddhist temples are a good option for public-access AED deployment. Thailand is a religious Buddhist country where people frequently visit neighboring temples; particularly elderly people do so every day to pray and provide a small donation (e.g. food for the monks). Highly respected monks are old and having chronic diseases. Furthermore, temples attract many tourists. On holidays and during festivals, temples are crowded with community people and tourists.

In Khon Kaen, a northeastern province of Thailand, 15 AEDs were deployed in public places in 2015 by Khon Kaen Emergency Medical Foundation, a non-profit organization. Of them, two were deployed in highly respected Buddhist temples, one in Wat Nong Waeng and one in Wat Pa Thamma Utthayan. The Foundation, supported by Khon Kaen Hospital and the National Institute of Emergency Medicine, has a mission to disseminate public-access AEDs and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) skills to the public.

The Foundation provided CPR training to the people working or living in or near the AED-deployed places, including the monks of the two temples. So far, in each of the two temples, 4-hour training session was provided once; total of 105 monks were trained. The training program consisted of a lecture and skill stations for both one-rescuer and two-rescuer CPR procedures for adults (Fig. 1). The training included the following contents: to assure safety; to assess the person by tapping the shoulder and call him/her loudly; if no response, to ask a help to call an ambulance (phone number is 1669 throughout Thailand) and bring an AED; to provide chest compressions.

Most of the monks who attended the training program could perform basic resuscitation procedures well. Few old monks, however, had difficulties in continuing the chest compressions for 2 min due to pains in their knees and backs; though they completed the training. The participants understood the importance of the training and suggested refresher CPR training in the temple at least once a year.



Fig. 1 – Chest compression training to monks in a temple.

Such temple-based programs may have several merits to the public, though the program in Khon Kaen was originally intended to benefit the respected elderly monks in the temple. First, community people, who highly respect the monks, appreciate the program and may become aware of the necessity of CPR training and AED deployment in public places. Second, the program also benefits the visitors of the temple, majority of whom are the elderly. Third, the program, if done every year, would disseminate CPR skills to a larger population in Thailand; most of the males in Thailand, particularly in rural areas, become a monk albeit temporarily usually for at least one year to show their devotion to Buddhism.

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Conflict of interest

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This manuscript has not been published or presented elsewhere in part or in entirety and is not under consideration by another journal.

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