

# Introduction

## The origins, development and prospects of the largest ever assembly of collaborative research projects in Asia

Over the past 20 years the REAP projects generated more than 70 publications as well as a well-structured network of centers located in 15 countries of Asia. The projects produced information about the way in which psychotropic medications are used in different Asian countries and about factors which influence their use. Prior to REAP, such data did not exist despite their importance for the planning and evaluation of mental health services. While planning projects and interpreting their results, investigators from Asian countries became good friends while also being selfless contributors to REAP projects which were done impeccably well without any external grants for the preparation of the research protocols and assessment instruments, the data analysis or the coordination of the work in different countries.

It is difficult to say how the REAP project conglomerate came into existence because many people contributed their ideas which eventually lead to the current REAP structure. At the very beginning in the early 90's of the past century professors N Shinfuku and N. Sartorius discussed ways of carrying out collaborative research that could be useful in the organization and evaluation of mental health services in Asia even if there are no external resources to support it. One of the ideas was to carry out census investigations which can be done with few resources and yet, particularly if repeated, can provide very useful data. A census study of prescriptions of psychotropic medications is a good example of the class of census investigations and has the advantage of producing results of immediate usefulness in the organization of services and psychiatric treatment: it therefore seemed a particularly attractive option for collaborative research and action. Sometime later, during the International Symposium on Neuro-psychopharmacology in Singapore in 1999, this idea was taken further and leading experts from six Asian countries agreed to carry out a census investigation of treatment of schizophrenia in their countries.

The study was completed in 2001 and it was a success in every way – it produced useful data, it brought investigators in different countries of Asia together into a collaborative network and it proved that important studies can be done even when no external funding is available

The success of the first investigation nourished ambitions and courage to continue. In 2004, the REAP group undertook a second project this time addressing the follow up survey on schizophrenia inpatients and also on the use of antidepressants in Asia. Similar surveys were carried out in 2008, 2012 and 2016, each making the REAP community stronger.

The pages that follow list publications that resulted from the REAP studies. They are presented not only to serve as an easy reference to investigators or policy makers and teachers of psychiatry but also to bear witness to the remarkable willingness of leaders of mental health services and their institutions to participate in collaborative research and to join hands and minds in thinking about ways to improve care provided to people with mental disorders in Asia

Dated .August 2018

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Norman Sartorius". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'N' and a long, sweeping underline.

Professor Norman Sartorius, MD, PhD, FRCPsych.

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