

## **Foreword to the special issue of the Asian Pacific Journal of Health Economics and Policy**

### **The International Forum on COVID19 in Asian Context: COVID-19; policy reaction and the contribution of Health Economics**

**Prof. Haruko Noguchi, PhD**  
**Guest editor in chief**  
**Chairperson for the Forum**  
**Professor, Faculty of Political Science and Economics,**  
**Waseda University, Tokyo, Japan**

COVID-19 has been both a public health and a socio-economic crisis on a global scale. Asian countries report somewhat lower COVID cases and deaths than countries in other regions like the United States and European countries, which remains something of a puzzle. Several epidemiological and non-epidemiological hypotheses may explain Asian countries' lower levels of infection, such as the exposure to a milder version of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 conferring herd immunity; the validity of Bacillus Calmette-Guerin (BCG) vaccine used in those countries; and Asian inherent culture of social distancing and face mask use, as non-pharmaceutical interventions. We have as yet insufficient information to solve the puzzle.

Macroeconomic studies find that the pandemic has produced both supply and demand shocks to the economy. For example, lower consumption and fewer foreign visitors reduce demand. Factory utilization has dropped in connection with efforts to lower the spread of infection. Economic vitality remained sluggish, as measured by bankruptcies and employment, over 2020. Furthermore, government policies such as lockdowns, emergency declarations, and vaccine policies have had a significant impact on the socioeconomic activities of people and firms.

This special issue of Asian Pacific Journal of Health Economics and Policy seeks to draw lessons on how to minimize the costs of uncontrolled public health epidemics while balancing them with the socio-economic costs of reduced production and consumption from public and private sector responses in five Asian countries to COVID-19 pandemic, Taiwan, Korea, India, Singapore, and Japan. First, we can discuss how and why so from several epi and/or non-epi aspects. Second, socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 pandemic for these countries are also important to be discussed. Furthermore, government policies such as lockdowns, emergency declarations, and vaccine policies have had a significant impact on the socio economic activities of people and firms in these countries. It is worthwhile for us to learn experience in each country with each other.