

Abstract

The objective of this survey study is to find out the factors which influence uses of herbal medicine prescribed by physicians. Specific sampling was used to select the physicians while the patients were selected on a stratified sampling basis in each section of the hospital. The population of the research, calculated by Yamane's formula, consisted of 400 patients. Having been verified for their quality and content validity of the questions in terms of knowledge about, attitudes toward, and satisfaction levels of the factors related to the products with Cronbach alpha coefficient method by 3 experts, the pre-construction questionnaires used in this study obtained the scores of the abovementioned factors at 0.83, 0.88, and 0.94 respectively. Personal interviews also conducted with the patients as well as 12 physicians in the hospital where the study took place. The demographic data of the population can be summarized as follows; the majority of the respondents were female (71.3%), aged higher than 60 years old (53%), were married and were still living with his or her spouse (78.0%), worked as laborers (38.3%), had less-than-5,000-baht monthly income (60.0%), finished only elementary school level (68.7%), were living outside municipal area (77.2%), had experience in using herbal medicines (88.0%), had requested for herbal medicines (73.2%), had been given herbal medicines via prescriptions (92.2%), and had been supported by his or her family to use herbal medicines (91.5%).

The findings on knowledge about, attitudes toward, and satisfaction levels of the products indicated that most of the samples possessed correct knowledge about herbal medicines at a medium level (65.5%) and had positive attitudes toward uses of herbal medicines at a medium level (67.5%). When asked about their satisfactions on each factor of herbal medicines, the majority of the respondents were reportedly satisfied at a medium level on products (54.8%), prices (52.3%), places of distribution (46.5%), promotion (53.3%), curability (53.0%), and safety in uses (57.8%).

The findings on factors that influenced the uses of herbal medicines prescribed by physicians among the samples revealed that the patients' need to use them was the

most influencing factors (Odd ratio = 7.904, $p < .05$), followed by support for the use from his or her family (Odd ratio = 3.102, $p < .05$), while attitudes became the less influencing one (Odd ratio = 0.496, $p < .05$).

On the physicians' side, the findings showed that physicians reportedly perceive some properties of herbal medicines, especially those of cinnamon to relieve a dyspepsia symptom and those of balm to relieve muscle pains. The majority of them (91.7%) had an attitude that herbal medicines could be given to a patient instead of pharmaceutical drugs only in some cases. The problem that most physicians have not given herbal medicines to their patients is caused by the fact that they are not confident on curability of herbal medicines. Most physicians sometimes use herbal medicines according to the policies of their hospital but have not received any information about herbal medicines from relevant researches; thus, there should be more publicity on herbal medicines, especially about how to use them, their curability, and proper quantity of doses like those of pharmaceutical drugs.

According to the research findings, it can be concluded that patients' needs, support for uses of herbal medicines from patients' families, and patients' attitudes were the key factor to support uses of herbal medicines; as a consequence, there should be more publicity on herbal medicines, and the patients who have used them should be encouraged to promulgate them to the people around them in order to increase positive attitudes toward herbal medicines which may lead to more uses of them in hospitals.