

**THE ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE IN THAI SOCIETY: A CASE STUDY
OF BALAVI NATURAL HEALTH CENTER**

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THE ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE IN THAI SOCIETY: A CASE STUDY OF
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ABSTRACT

The objective of this research is to investigate the service patterns of Balavi Natural Health Center, an alternative medical center, including illness types, service users, factors affecting natural health services, satisfaction with treatment and the opinions of modern physicians on alternative treatment. A descriptive methodology was employed and in-depth interviews were carried out with the owners of the center, service users and modern medical doctors. A retrospective data collection accompanied by an in-depth telephone interview was conducted with the population and sample group who underwent health courses from January to September 2001.

The study findings reveal that the center combines modern and alternative (natural health) medical treatments in healing patients. The service system is divided between the clinic, which is legally recognized, and the natural health center. Treatments focus on natural health therapy with little or no chemical drug use. Dissemination of knowledge on natural health to the public is via books, articles published in journals and magazines and television programs. The physicians providing treatments are modern medical doctors with a reputation in natural health therapy, contributing to acceptance of alternative medicine among the public.

Most of the service users were females, aged 50 years and over and suffering from chronic illnesses for over a month. The majority of them had undergone medical treatments from hospitals and the most frequently found malady was cancer. The factors making patients seek treatments at the center include a belief that natural health therapy is a safe alternative treatment, increasing immunity and strengthening patients' health. In addition, patients are discouraged by modern medical treatments. Information sources about the center are television and recommendations from others. What patients expect from the treatment most is better health and immunity to fight against their ailments.

KEY WORDS: ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE/ NATURAL HEALTH/ MODERN
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บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษารูปแบบการใช้บริการของศูนย์ธรรมชาติบำบัดบ๊บลี ซึ่งเป็นสถานพยาบาลที่รักษาความเจ็บป่วยแบบการแพทย์ทางเลือก โดยศึกษาประเภทความเจ็บป่วย กลุ่มผู้รับบริการ ปัจจัยในการเลือกใช้บริการการรักษาแบบธรรมชาติบำบัด ความพึงพอใจต่อการรักษา รวมทั้งความคิดเห็นของแพทย์แผนปัจจุบันต่อการรักษาโดยวิธีการแพทย์ทางเลือก ใช้ระเบียบวิธีวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพ โดยการสัมภาษณ์แบบเจาะลึกแพทย์เจ้าของศูนย์ธรรมชาติบำบัดบ๊บลี ผู้มารับบริการ และความคิดเห็นของแพทย์แผนปัจจุบัน ในส่วนของผู้มารับบริการ ได้ศึกษาข้อมูลย้อนหลังของผู้มาใช้บริการระหว่างเดือนมกราคม พ.ศ.2544 ถึงเดือนกันยายน พ.ศ. 2544 และใช้วิธีสัมภาษณ์ทางโทรศัพท์ร่วมด้วยในกรณีที่เป็นการสัมภาษณ์แบบเจาะลึก

ผลการศึกษาพบว่าศูนย์ธรรมชาติบำบัดบ๊บลีมีรูปแบบการรักษาผู้ป่วยโดยใช้วิธีผสมผสานระหว่างการแพทย์แผนปัจจุบันและการแพทย์ทางเลือก (ธรรมชาติบำบัด) ระบบการให้บริการแบ่งเป็นส่วนคลินิก และ ส่วนของศูนย์ธรรมชาติบำบัดบ๊บลี ในส่วนของคลินิกเป็นสถานพยาบาลที่ถูกต้องตามกฎหมาย การรักษาเน้นการใช้วิธีการทางธรรมชาติบำบัดโดยใช้ยาแผนปัจจุบันแต่น้อยหรือไม่ใช้เลย มีการเผยแพร่ความรู้ทางธรรมชาติบำบัดสู่สายตามประชาชนโดยการเขียนหนังสือ คอลัมน์ในหนังสือพิมพ์และวารสารต่างๆ และรายการโทรทัศน์ แพทย์ผู้ทำการรักษาเป็นผู้ที่มีชื่อเสียงและเป็นที่ยอมรับในการให้การรักษารูปแบบธรรมชาติบำบัด ทำให้ได้รับการยอมรับจากประชาชนส่วนหนึ่ง

ส่วนผู้ที่มารับบริการตรวจรักษาที่ศูนย์ธรรมชาติบำบัดบ๊บลี พบว่าเป็นเพศหญิงมากกว่าเพศชาย ส่วนใหญ่อยู่ในวัย 50 ปีขึ้นไป อาการที่พบมากเป็นการเจ็บป่วยเรื้อรังมานานกว่า 1 เดือน และส่วนใหญ่ผ่านการรักษาจากโรงพยาบาลมาแล้ว โรคที่พบมากคือโรคมะเร็ง ปัจจัยที่ทำให้ผู้รับบริการเลือกมาใช้บริการที่นี้คือธรรมชาติบำบัดเป็นทางเลือกหนึ่งในการรักษาโรคซึ่งมีความปลอดภัยสูง เชื่อว่าการรักษาแบบธรรมชาติบำบัดจะช่วยให้สุขภาพแข็งแรงขึ้น และมีภูมิต้านทานโรคมมากขึ้น และผู้รับบริการมีความท้อแท้จากการรักษาโรคตามแบบแผนปัจจุบัน แหล่งข้อมูลข่าวสารที่ผู้รับบริการได้รับคือ โทรทัศน์ และจากคำแนะนำของผู้อื่น สิ่งที่ได้รับบริการคาดหวังมากที่สุดคือการสร้างเสริมภูมิคุ้มกันโรค และมีสุขภาพแข็งแรงเพื่อต่อสู้กับโรคภัยไข้เจ็บได้

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Problem Statement

The ever fast-changing social and economic conditions have adverse effects on ways of life and well-being of people from all walks of life. However, education and media disseminating knowledge on health enable people to acquire more knowledge on the topic. Nonetheless, present social and economic situations are not favorable for people to actually look after their health regularly. They are aware of their health only when they become sick and their health is starting to deteriorate. Presently, the outbreak of diseases has changed from infection to behavior-related maladies, such as, AIDS, cardio-vascular diseases, cancer, stress and so on. The number of people suffering from these ailments nowadays is increasing rapidly.

When a sickness occurs, most people mainly seek treatment from modern medicine, which is regarded as scientific and acutely effective in treating diseases. Ultimately, it is found at present that modern medicine is not a panacea. It could not completely cure certain maladies, e.g., AIDS or cancer, despite using expensive and modern medical equipment and drugs.

Due to limitations of modern medicine, a group of people have thus turned to alternative medicines to treat their illnesses. Such a phenomenon does not only take place in Thailand but in almost all countries throughout the world, regardless of the United States of America, a country which has achieved the highest in medical advancement. As for Thailand, patterns of alternative medicines from various countries have been spread through various means. The mass media have played a significant role in spreading the concepts and patterns of alternative medical treatment to consumers. There are two groups of organizations having a pivotal part in disseminating alternative medical treatment in Thailand. The first group is directly

involved in health care, including medical centers and charity organizations, e.g., Chinese traditional medicine, natural therapy, macro-biotics, yoray, yoga or vegetarian groups. The second group is those launching campaigns to provide information on alternative medicines to the public without specifying any type.

An alternative medicine is evidently different from modern medicine. The latter provides treatments to patients discretely. In the eyes of a doctor, a patient's body is divided into separate parts and he is interested in only the part or parts he is specialized in, disregarding a life as a holistic body. On the contrary, alternative medicine has similar treatment concepts and patterns, regarding that body, mind and society are inter-connected. It further regards health as something related to life rather than putting an emphasis on sickness. As a consequence, treatment or dealing with a part of the body is done in such a way that takes the "whole" body into consideration, not separate parts. It is therefore known as the holistic medicine.

Studies on alternative medicine in Thailand have been conducted. However, most of them focus on traditional Thai or tribal medicine. Investigations on types of alternative medicine are still a few. It is thus interesting to investigate another type of alternative medicine in Thailand. This study focuses on Balavi Natural Health Center. It is a medical center run by modern medical doctors who seek new alternative treatments to cure patients without depending on many modern drugs. They have finely integrated natural health treatment with modern medicine. Most importantly, the health center has existed for almost two decades. It was founded when alternative medicine was not yet popular in the Thai society. It is interesting to find out what factors and conditions contributing to the acceptance and popularity of the health center until now.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

1.2.1 To study concepts and patterns of services at the Balavi Natural Health Center

1.2.2 To investigate patients and types of sickness at the center

1.2.3 To investigate factors affecting the selection to use services at the center

1.2.4 To study problems and difficulties in operating the center

1.3 Expected Results

1.3.1 It could be seen the battles in terms of concepts and techniques of alternative medicine for its acceptance in the Thai society, where modern medicine is the major trend, by using the Balavi Natural Health Center as a case study.

1.3.2 The trend in seeking alternative treatment and health care of the middle and high-class people who are hopeless in modern medicine could be realized.

1.3.3 Working processes and strategies in disseminating alternative health care could be publicized as the center is a popular alternative medical agency in the country.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This investigation covers the founders and operations of the center (concepts in establishing the center, criteria in selecting patterns of alternative treatment, and operational problems and difficulties), patterns of service provision, service users, and comments of academics interested in alternative medical treatments so that future trends of alternative medicine in Thailand could be perceived.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Concepts of this Study

In investigating the alternative medicine in Thai society, the concepts on health care and medical systems in Thai society, patterns in selection of health services of Thai people nowadays, and alternative holistic medicine and natural therapy are used as a guideline for analyzing the data. The concepts could be detailed as follows:

2.1.1 Concept on Health and Sickness

Preecha Upayokhin (1984) investigates socio-cultural and universal parameters of health as follows:

- 1) Maladies and sicknesses will inevitably happen to all human beings.
- 2) Every society has a means to cure sicknesses according to their beliefs or cultures.
- 3) In every society, there are reasons to explain human behaviors and development according to cultural changes or diffusion, both internally and externally.
- 4) Good health is an ultimate goal of human beings and man has developed means of treatment according to cultural and physical environment, which might be similar or different from society to society.

2.1.2 Concept on Medical and Health Care Systems in Society

Arthur Klienman (1980:73) mentions about the concept on health care system that a factor defining a health care method of an individual is a belief in causes of sickness, which would specify behavior, selection and evaluation, treatment methods and social relationship system of individuals concerned with the sickness, both those giving and receiving treatment. In addition, other social factors, e.g., different beliefs, education and society influence the perception and behavior in dealing with health problems.

Klienman further mention health care patterns in the society that in a complex society, there are various health care patterns and he divides medical system in the society into 3 sectors as follows:

1) Popular sector

This health care system does not depend on medical specialists and the family is the first to learn of the sickness. Health care activities and all types of treatment in the family and community would incur no expenses and there is no consultation with doctors or caregivers. The treatment includes self-healing or providing advice or treatment by friends, relatives or colleagues who have experienced on healing such sickness. In this system, the family plays an important role in providing health care or primary health care, which generally exists in the society.

When sickness occurs, an individual would choose the steps of treatment, starting from self-healing to consulting with others. Self-healing depends on folk beliefs about body structure and work, origin and nature of sickness, treatments including drug use, folk healing, change of food and behavior, foods as drugs, and changes of behavior relative to sickness, such as, prayers or rituals.

In general, the popular medical system includes beliefs in health care, good health which includes correct behavior of health care and disease prevention, beliefs in eating, drinking, sleeping, dressing, working, praying and general practices, which vary from culture to culture.

Patterns of health care in this system happen among the mass, connecting among relatives, friends, residents, colleagues and religious organizations. This means that patients and care givers exchange symptoms of health and sickness and therefore misunderstanding rarely takes place. Their relationship is informal and there is no expenditure of treatment. The relationship takes place within the network of those suffering from sicknesses. Moreover, there are no fixed regulations to control behaviors or situations, and at the mean time there might be changes of roles between patients and care givers.

2) Folk sector

In the folk system, which is a large size in a non-western society, individuals specialized in treatment may or may not emphasize on rituals or holiness or both. Caregivers are not a part of the professional medical system, but hold a rank between popular and professional sectors. In this sector, health care system requires non-professional specialists. There is no organization and the practice might be illegal or it might be medical practices stemming from local culture, for instance, folk doctors, chiropractors, midwives or shamans.

Folk doctors and their patients share the same value, culture and perspectives as well as belief in causes and treatment of sickness. Treatments are holistic, concerning all dimensions of a patient's life, which includes relationship with others in the society, environment and supernatural power. Advocates perceive that such a treatment is better than that of modern medicine, for instance, participation of family in diagnosing and healing sickness or treatment that comprises a care giver surrounded by his assistants and family members of a patient. It is an efficient team of primary health care. In the perspective of modern medicine, such a treatment is ideal for healing socio-psychological health problems.

Basically, a folk doctor has far less training than a western medical doctor. The expertise stems from practices with older doctors. Relationship between folk and professional doctors is distrustful and doubtful. Modern medical doctors usually regard folk doctors as con-artists and people who are dangerous to health.

3) Professional sector

Professional medical system must be acquired formally, based on scientific research. It is universal and could be applied to all races. There is only one treatment pattern and the same medical equipment is used. In this perspective sickness is caused by a disease and treatment must be separate, healing only the abnormal parts of body organs. Health care system must be conducted by legal and professional medical personnel, such as, doctors, nurses, therapists or pharmacists. The organization is formal within the bureaucratic system under the rule of laws. Professional doctors have a higher social status and income with a clear right in providing treatment. They also have more regulations to observe and authority to question, examine, advise and treat patients, which sometimes might be dangerous. They can also make decisions on sickness and providing treatment. At times, those decisions might be against patients' ideas.

Although modern medicine may be effective in treating patients, it is not always a success in curing all diseases. Furthermore, problems of modern treatment may sometimes discourage the public, such as, distant relationship between doctors and patients or the use of sophisticated technology to diagnose and treat ailments, resulting in higher expenditure. These are some of the reasons why more people are seeking other forms of medical services.

Medical system in Thai society is pluralistic, i.e., multi-dimensional health care patterns. Choices of health care and medical services do not confine in any medical system alone. Due to social communication and cultural connection, health care methods and treatment from other societies have been incorporated with local ones. Thus, alternative medicine is the combination of Thai and foreign sciences.

2.1.3 Concept on Health Care and Health Care Services

Luechai Sri-ngernyuang and Thaweethong Hongwiwat (1990) classify health care behavior during sickness into 3 groups as follows:

1) Health care activities carried out instead of professional service or before seeking professional service include no action, wait and see, no-medicine

self-treatment and medicine self-treatment. They are the most easily seen treatment behaviors of the general public.

2) Health care activities carried out as the main component of additional healing process prescribed by professionals are highly acceptable among medical professionals.

3) Health care activities intended to alter services or advise of medical professionals are activated by patients to counter treatment or advice believed to be insufficient for their sickness. Patients might carry out multiple treatment actions.

Eramus (1953), cited in Wathinee Bunchalaksamee's, 1987: 13, and Anderson, 1980, cited in Busayamat Bunchaipheth's, 1983: 10, mention about the decision to use medical services that selection to use any service depends on the following factors.

1) Different sickness symptoms require different sources of service providers.

2) Characteristics of population at risk include gender, age, education, profession, race, health care value as well as ability of an individual to get access to services, income, residence and community.

3) Consumer satisfaction includes waiting time, convenience in seeing doctors, quality and behavior of service providers.

Alex Kroeger (1983), cited in Malika Matiko's, 1991, proposes a concept on behavior and treatment seeking in developing countries. He points out sickness, factors using and not using medical services of modern and traditional medicine. There are two models as follows:

1) Pathway models. These include steps of decision-making and sickness behavior of an individual. It starts from perceiving and evaluating symptoms and using medical resources.

2) Determinate models explain defining factors and alternatives or opportunities to use different services. It attempts to explain levels of difficulty of seeking treatment, belief and faith in medical system and perception on severity of

ailments that a patient understands. There are 3 factors affecting the selection of service-providing sources.

(1) Predisposing factors include population aspects (age, gender), household aspects and conditions, components of the family, attitude, education, relationship with social networks, ethnic group and religion, socio-economic status, occupation, innovations, and decision on health status.

(2) Enabling factors include chronic or acute sickness, severity of sickness, causes and types of sickness, expectation and satisfaction of patients, access to services, health insurance, and stability of income.

(3) Health services system factors include services and facilities of service venues, e.g., geographical location, acceptance of officers, satisfaction with treatment quality and expenses, and structure of service system which connects with social and political systems.

Pensri Kaweewongprasert (1985) states about patterns of selection in using health care services of Thai people that in terms of sickness behaviors, whenever one becomes sick, he would counteract occurring health changes, ranging from observing without doing anything to self-healing. The reactions depend on self-evaluation and/or family members or those around him, who play a part in insisting on that he is sick, which requires treatment from himself or relatives. When self-treatment is ineffective, seeking other health services would follow. To choose the services with whom and where depends on several factors, e.g., belief, attitude, knowledge about the sickness and its symptoms, severity of sickness, effective healing methods, socio-economic status of the patient, support or impediment of those around him, availability of health care services in the community, competency of health personnel, and quality of drugs and medical equipment. Moreover, distance, time and medical expenses also play an important part in motivating or hindering the decision of patients to use medical services in both private and state sectors. Consequently, study on sickness behaviors to obtain patterns of medical service utilization of patients is sensitive and complicated in each culture, since these norms are different from one society to another.

From investigating patterns of selection to use medical services of Thai people above, it could be used to compare and explain what factors play a part in the decision-making of patients to use services at Balavi Natural Health Center.

2.1.4 Concepts on Holistic Medicine and Alternative Medicine

Concept of Holistic Health

Holistic or holism is derived from a Greek word “Holos”, meaning “whole” or “wholeness”, which means the whole truth of unity that could no longer be divided (Rujnat Attasit, cited in Pajuban Hemhongsa, editor, 1998: 48).

Holistic health regards health in a positive way, which emphasizes on continual wellness of life. The essence of holistic health is that an individual is able to look after his health, based on the perspective and pattern of a healthy lifestyle. That individual defines, receives benefits and evaluates his health (ibid., 51).

Health in this perspective does not only mean disease-free but wellness or quality of the whole life. Such a perspective is in accordance with the definition of health by the World Health Organization. It defines health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, not merely an absence of diseases or infirmity. In 1998, the WHO Assembly added the word “spiritual well-being” in the definition (Prawes Wasee, 1998: 4).

Susan Walter, chairperson of American Holistic Health Association, states that holistic health is concerned with the whole life rather than emphasizing on sickness or dealing with certain parts of the body. Consideration should be put on the whole body, connection of body, mind and spirituality as well as surrounding factors that interact with a person. She also proposes 5 basic principles of holistic health as follows:

- 1) Holistic health does not merely value health as sickness-free, but adjust, correct and develop to obtain well-being regularly.
- 2) Our health reflects our way of life. Whatever you consume would define the physical and mental state of that person.

3) Health promotion and prevention is most important. Holistic health focuses on developing higher level of good health by reviewing daily behavior that affect our health.

4) Holistic health focuses on valuable ways of life. Learning and assigning responsibility to individuals would contribute to his complete and balanced well-being.

5) During sickness, exchange on holistic treatment and health care would be carried out between a doctor and his patients. Treatment emphasizes on natural therapy and human and environmental factors (Pathamawadee Kasikam, 1998: 8-9).

Rujinat Atthasit (1998: 51-52) perceives that holistic health care focuses on the care of body, mind, emotion and spirituality under balanced and harmonious environment. Sickness reflects internal imbalance and disharmony of multi-dimensions of life. When sickness occurs, holistic health care would provide an opportunity to different means, e.g., modern or alternative medicines, to adjust health balance. A holistic care-giver does not only emphasize on present symptoms but detect factors of the imbalance and cooperate with a patient to regenerate his whole life. That is to look after balance within an individual and between the individual and his environment. An individual must have self-awareness and self-regulatory process in physical, mental, spiritual and environmental terms. Furthermore, social and physical environment also contributes to holistic health care. The process of treatment must take the whole person into consideration by focusing on a patient looking after himself, whereas doctors and technology only complement and empower the natural healing process of a patient. A care giver would be related to a patient in every dimension. Diagnosis is holistic and natural therapy is the main focus so that internal balance could be restored. The patient must carry out self-regeneration and self-regulation process as well as connect himself to the environment, from family, community to physical environment. A holistic treatment process should take place under a suitable environment, which is the atmosphere between doctors, patients and physical environment.

Koshito Otsuka, chairman of Japan Holistic Medical Society, states that holistic medicine is based on relationship and harmony of life, society, nature and universe. Life power or natural self-healing power is the essence of treatment and rehabilitation. The basic principle of therapy depends on how to retrieve life power or natural therapy power from a patient. The patient is a true healer while drugs or others are only an assisting component. Healers or doctors only provide patients advice or encouragement. Patients thus have to correctly understand his health before treatment could be effective (Pathamawadee, *ibid.*: 8)

Venerable Phaisal Wisalo (1998: 20-22) compares modern and holistic medicines and views that modern medicine reflects industrial process and culture, where a factory is a concrete proto-type as follows:

Separation. A patient is divided into separate parts and nobody is responsible for him as a whole person.

Centralization. Production is centered at the factory and power of treatment is at the hospital or medical institution. Doctors themselves are clustered in big hospitals, so it is hard to distribute medical services to rural communities.

Services are like finished products from the same factory. The same medical services are given to everyone with similar symptoms despite different causes.

Capital is the main factor. Healing process puts an emphasis on expensive equipment and technology, neglecting intimate care and human relationship that a doctor should have toward his patients.

Unlimited material growth. The emphasis is to build bigger and more hospitals in discordance with nature. They are not interested in cooperating with nature to rehabilitate self-healing of the body.

Focusing on high technology. The more complicated diagnostic and treatment technology, the better.

On the contrary, holistic medicine reflects ecological paradigm and culture, with the following differences:

Integration. Every part of a patient's life gets equal importance, be they work, exercise, family, social life, food, and mental and emotional states.

Decentralization. Healing power or competency is distributed to everyone as much as possible.

Emphasis on specific characteristics of a patient. It is aware that each patient has peculiar characteristics which require specific healing methods.

Human is the main factor. It is aware that warmth and heartiness of a care giver is significant to treatment, not drugs, equipment or hospitals.

Humanity orientation. Human growth and quality of life are more important than the expansion of hospitals.

Awareness on ecological balance. Self-healing should be promoted rather than using drugs or alien substances to invade the body.

Appropriate technology. Sophisticated machines that penetrate the body should be avoided, such as, x-ray and radioactive machines.

Venerable Wisalo further mentions about a new health trend. Due to decreasing faith in modern medicine, more people are trying to depend on themselves in terms of health rather than relying entirely on doctors like in the past. The power to control their bodies is gradually in their own hands, starting from changing their attitude. More people are aware that a healthy lifestyle is more important for their well-being than any technology. New groups have been formed to help heal and promote physical and mental health simultaneously. The concept of self-care has spread widely. A new health process has grown to offer new alternatives instead of conventional treatment. Although therapeutic methods of this process are various or in combination of old and new, the emphasis is on patients having a role to look after themselves. Doctors and technology are external factors complementing and empowering the existing natural healing process in the patients. A healer is related to every dimension of his patient: physical, mental, emotional and environmental. Such a treatment is called holistic, which is based on ecological perspective. It is aware of value and potential of human beings and regards that everything in nature is inter-connected and inter-dependent on one another, which could not be compartmentalized. As a consequence, a holistic therapy is different from modern medicine, particularly on health and causes of sickness.

Concept on Alternative Medicine

Alternative health or alternative medicine is a medical technique that is unknown to or unacceptable by modern medical professionals. Most of the techniques

are non-invalid and non-pharmaceutical. Other terms include unorthodox medicine, non-conventional medicine, holistic medicine, traditional medicine, ethnomedicine or natural medicine.

The above definitions are based on the norm of western medicine. At present, there is a tendency to view all existing medical systems in the society as “alternatives” with their own strengths and weaknesses. WHO even proposes a perspective focusing on the possibility of each system to complement one another or to complete what others lack, which is known as “complementary medicine”. The outstanding aspect of most alternative medicine is holistic health care (Socio-cultural Policy Group, Office of Public Health Policy and Planning, 1999: 2).

Traditional medicine is an ancient method of treatment according to cultures of ethnic groups, which has existed long before modern medicine. It is also known as indigenous, alternative, folk or fringe medicine. It regards life as the wholeness of body, feeling, mentality and spirituality. Good health requires a good balance between physical, mental, social, moral and spiritual happiness (Barnerman, 1997:1).

Alternative medicine is a form of health promotion and treatment of sicknesses that is not confined to chemical and drug use or surgery as usually practiced in modern medical system. Individuals have a right to choose one or more methods that are suitable to their lives and needs. Doctors or public health personnel can no longer monopolize patterns of treatment (Weerawat Phankhrut, 2000: 72).

A preliminary survey of the Office of Public Health Policy and Planning in 1997 about alternative medical systems in Thailand (excluding traditional, folk or ethnic medicines) revealed that there were at least 38 alternative health sciences from other cultures and societies in Thailand. Another 35 sciences are categorized in the system of alternative health sciences that are in operation in the modern medical service system. They could be classified as follows:

- 1) Traditional medicine group. It is traditional medicine from other societies (excluding Thai traditional medicine).

- 1.1) Chinese medicine includes pulsing technique, balance of Yin-Yang, acupuncture, acupressure, reflexology, herbalism, and exercises, e.g., Tai Chi, Chi Kong.

1.2) Indian medicine includes Ayurveda medicine, such as, yoga, chakra breathing and fasting.

2) Bio-electromagnetic group creates bio-electromagnetic currents in the body to heal sicknesses. What is found in Thai society is biospectrum, electromagnetic field and universal life force.

3) Structural and energetic therapy includes techniques to heal body structure (bones, muscles and tendons) and life force, such as, Chi Kong, Tai chi, chiropractic, aquatic exercise, hot-cold therapy, hydro-therapy, massage, solar bath, and natural therapies.

4) Diet/nutrition/lifestyle promote changes of eating habit and nutrition supplements.

4.1) Health promotion and symptomatic treatment include diet, nutrition diet, nutrition therapy and nutrition supplements. The body of knowledge exists in both modern and alternative medicines.

4.2) A new way of eating style includes macrobiotic foods, vegetarianism and natural foods.

4.3) Treatments used exclusively for the digestive system include colon therapy, detoxification, fasting, vitamin therapy, megavitamin therapy of ortho-molecular, and juice therapy.

5) Body and mind control focuses on the relationship between body and mind, promotion of physical and mental health and psycho-therapy, which could be categorized as follows:

5.1) Existing techniques used in modern medical system, e.g., counseling, relaxation and psycho-therapy.

5.2) Alternative techniques, e.g., meditation, aroma therapy, art therapy, music therapy, breathing patterns, dance therapy, hypnosis, guided imaginary, and Yore

6) Bio-treatment group uses natural bio-substances to treat sicknesses and promote health, e.g., herbalism, anti-oxidizing agents, bio-oxidative medicine, homeopathy and urine therapy.

Wichit Paonil (2000: 36-45) mentions about alternative medicine in Thai society that the trend is increasing and the science has incorporated healing methods from other countries. At the same time, Thai alternative medicine has been revived and promoted after almost a century of neglect. It could be said that Thai alternative medicine is in a state of revival. The medicine has been accepted by present-day Thais partly, because of the work of state sector. Another part is due to popularity of foreign alternative medicine, which is usually applied to chronic psychological disorders, such as, group therapy or biofeedback. It may be an effective treatment method like acupuncture, which is used to treat stress-related problems.

In the private sector, the trend is highly popular. There are numerous publications and information about alternative medicine. It is well accepted and food supplement and health products as well as exercise venues are mushrooming. Places catering for alternative treatment could be found in private hospitals. Alternative treatments have opened more access for Thai people, particularly the educated and economically well-off, who have a high purchasing power and are in the working age, having little or no time to look after their health. There are advantages and disadvantages of the effects of alternative medicine on the health of Thais. On the positive side, it provides more opportunities for a patient to choose how to take care of his health. Alternative medical methods may complement what modern medicine could not provide for the patient, instance, giving an explanation that is in line with a patient's perception, providing more time to the patient, which would have psychological effects to the patient and his relatives. Giving more opportunities to those who are not satisfied with modern medicine to choose other health alternatives, and empowering the patient to control and look after his health, not merely under supervision of medical personnel. On the negative side, alternative medicine is often regarded as business-oriented employing advertisement strategies to recruit customers as many as possible. Thus, the information provided to the public is usually positive, covering the negative one and patients may be in danger. Most of the time treatment expenditure is very high since equipment is usually imported. Foreign practices may be detrimental to health and are not officially controlled. As a consequence, many methods are illegal and if practitioners are not specialized, it may be harmful to

patients. Additionally, many foreign practices may not be suitable to the local lifestyles, environment and social factors.

Nonetheless, advantages of alternative medicine are used commercially. Using modern medical approaches could still not cure many maladies. Patients are still suffering and there are numerous side effects. Doctors themselves treat only the disease, not the patient. Consequently, a number of patients have turned to alternative medicine, neglecting modern medicine or use both in combination. Alternative care givers pay special attention to the patients, understand them and provide them encouragement, which a patient is drastically in need. Some chronic ailments are the result of complicated reactions between body and mind. If it is psychologically acceptable, they might feel better. Sometimes, statistical measurement could not be used due to placebo effects, which is usually found in anxious, dependent and non-critical patients.

First of all, we have to understand the term professionalism, consumerism and commercialism. Modern medicine could not be commercially advertised as it is against the law, but alternative medicine tends to be commercialism rather than professionalism. If alternative medicine could satisfy consumers, there is no need to prove patient satisfaction versus proven effectiveness. It is thus easy for patients to turn to alternative medicine, which is more consumerism (Surawut Preechanon, 2001: 54-68).

Alternative medicine will exist and diversify in the age of globalization. To have a correct perspective toward alternative medicine, it is necessary to have correct understanding on the nature of medical systems. There are two perspectives that are limitations of understanding alternative medical phenomenon in the society.

The first perspective regards that in a society there is only one medical system, correct and absolute in itself and independent of any social context. This perspective is held among those adherent to the mainstream medical system. These specialists regard their science as absolute and measurable to decide other health sciences without limits. However, the truth is that health and sickness are a complicated bio-cultural phenomenon and its ever changing is the foundation of medical pluralism in the society. From global studies, it is revealed that in one society there are more than one medical systems, regardless of how advanced or backward

that society is. This is because there is no single absolute medical system that could meet sickness of diverse people in the society. Therefore, medical pluralism is a commonplace global phenomenon. To regard that alternative medicine is superstitious and should be annihilated when a society becomes developed and people are scientific is a wrong perspective that is against the truth of the world.

The second perspective regards medical knowledge or sciences in each system as static and separate. It regards present-day knowledge as correct and absolute.

To improve and develop existing and diverse health care patterns and concepts of medical systems requires social contexts that are favorable to learning from one another, with a friendly atmosphere to countercheck their strengths and weaknesses. It should be seen that different techniques and weaknesses of one system could be improved and what is correct today may prove to be false in the future. Different medical systems can complement one another and alternative medicine could be a complementary medicine (Komart Jungsathiansap, 1999).

It could therefore be said that no medical system is absolute because each has its own strengths and weaknesses. However, to bring out strengths of those systems should be beneficial to patients in general.

Sukchan Phongraphai (2001: 68-74) comments that modern medicine should apply strengths of alternative medicine because it focuses too much on curing diseases but lacks holistic or humanistic care. Alternative medicine still retains the holistic treatment, paying attention to the wholeness of a patient, society and environment. As doctors, they should be open-minded, integrating advantages of alternative medicine with the modern one. They should investigate what alternative techniques are suitable for what types of ailments, if there is any prohibition, and when to stop when alternative techniques become ineffective.

2.1.5 Concept on Public Relations for Marketing

Philip Kotler (1998: 783-823) says that a modern marketing principle requires more than good product development, attractive prices and easy access for target customers. What a company or producer is required to do is to communicate

with present and future customers or the public. Every company must inevitably play a role of a communicator and promoter. For most companies, the problem is not whether to communicate or not, but rather what should be communicated, to whom and how often.

There are components of marketing communication or promotion, which could be detailed as follows:

Advertisement is a no-man communication, paid by a promoter to present or promote an idea, product or service. Sales promotion is a short-term tool to promote the purchase of a product or service.

Public relations and dissemination are a plan designed to promote and/or maintain the image of a company or a product of a company.

Sales by using sales clerks is a fact-to-face communication between a seller and a prospective customer to present a product and answer customers' questions to motivate their want and decide to buy.

Direct marketing is another form of marketing, utilizing different media, e.g., letters, telephone, fax, emails and non-human communicative devices to directly motivate or communicate with target and prospective customers.

Duangporn Kamnunwatana (1998: 95-96) states that public relations work is a coordinate job between an organization and the public, particularly the target population. It enables the organization to know who the related group are, where they reside, what they like and dislike, how much they know about the organization, and more importantly what their feeling and needs toward the products and the organization are. In reverse, public relations work enables the target group to understand the organization more, know its operations and changes, and realize the feeling of the organization toward consumers. The role of connecting the organization and its target group is important because the organization, no matter what its products or services are or what its operational objectives are, must be involved with different groups of people, e.g., customers, service users, shareholders or employees. These people are a part of the organization's operation, success and failure. Consequently, public relations work connects the organization with its target group so that they

could understand and harbor positive thinking toward each other. It is one of the most important works of the organization.

The role and position of public relations work are concerned with production, personnel, finance and marketing. Each part is equally important. In terms of marketing, the work enables the organization to sell and popularize its products and services. How much it could sell depends on efficiency of the marketing department. To achieve its operational goals, the department must employ the following strategies.

Product, the marketing department is able to identify products and services to develop and popularize them. Furthermore, it could find good and attractive points of services to attract customers and service users. To attract them, the department uses comments and feelings of customers and service users as a guideline to develop products and services. Such a qualification is a product strategy that makes customers accept products and services more readily because they are in accordance with their interest and taste.

Price, defining a price is another marketing strategy that would popularize products and services. Price could not be specified according to production cost and benefit because it is a sensitive issues that affects the consumption of buyers and service user. Cost cutting is not necessarily a better and more successful strategy. Knowing customers is a necessity. Understanding the thinking process to exchange money for a product is the most important. The department should know what their customers think about its products and services in terms of value and quality. Customer's satisfaction could not be interpreted in monetary terms. They should think about the cost-effectiveness of the products and services. Products and services should provide satisfaction to buyers and users as well. This is the quality of their products and services. If such matters could be realized, considering prices for marketing strategy would be more appropriate.

Place, the place position and display of products for sale is another important issue that affects sales. Displaying products in a manner that they could be easily seen and handy is a good strategy. At present, a proactive strategy is used to bring products and services to customers. In addition, they have to consider distribution channels, which must be flexible and easy for products and services to be delivered to customers in a short period of time.

Promotion, it is a proactive operation to popularize products and services by using convincing media as an operational strategy. The communication will be direct to consumers to create perception of products and services, which would lead to their understanding, satisfaction, appreciation and acceptance.

Sales promotion strategies include advertising, public relations and sales promotion. They share a common goal, that is, to sell products and services. However their principles and practices are completely different. Advertising creates popular trends in products and services periodically by motivating consumers' interests through communication techniques as a catalyst for their needs to use the products and services. Public relations creates popularity, trust, faith and acceptance in consumers continuously and tries to maintain the level at all times. Operations are systematic and projects are interconnected, employing a two-way communication with consumers.

Balavi Natural Health Center is operated by a private sector, providing natural care to patients. As a consequence, public relations to attract customers to use its services and know its operations are crucial so that the center could be in operation. Public relations would create acceptance in its operations among customers, enabling the center to expand its services. The concept on public relations for marketing is another issue to be analyzed in this investigation.

2.2 Related Research Studies

There are documents and studies related to alternative medicine in Thailand, which could be summarized as follows:

Pennapha Sapcharoen and others (1997) investigate the application of Thai traditional medicine in the state public health system. It is found that most clinics provided massage, herbal sauna and herbal production and sales. In terms of satisfaction, most users were satisfied with the services and the number of users was increasing. Middle and low-class users liked to use the services and their satisfaction level was high.

Nathaporn Srimuk (1998: 77-90) investigates relationship between exposure to media, knowledge, attitude and acceptance in the way of life according to body and

mind principles of 600 Bangkok residents. It is found that exposure to books and journals about body and mind was positively related to knowledge on the way of life. Exposure to television, magazines, journals, books about body and mind, and family members was positively related to attitude toward body and mind. Exposure to all types of media was positively related to acceptance in the way of life according to body and mind principles. Respondents with different age, gender and marital status significantly accepted the way of life differently. Females accepted it more than males did and respondents with the age of over 60 accepted the most. Separated couples accepted more than singles and married. The variable predicting the acceptance included exposure to newspapers, family members and friends, books and videos, pamphlets about the topic, marital status, and income.

Suriyaporn Somboonburana (1999: 120-124) investigates the factors contributing to changes in self-care behaviors by using the body and mind principles among 220 subjects interested in the issue. It is found that most respondents were females, aged between 26-35 years with bachelor degree and higher. The factor affecting changes of behavior in self-care was age. Respondents aged between 36-45 years changed their self-care behavior the most, their well-being, behavior in seeking health services in the past and at present, and self-care behavior in the past. Nonetheless, genders, marital status, education, occupation, income, knowledge in body and mind, and other complementary factors, e.g., exposure to information, awareness on health care according to body and mind principles, and convenience of practice did not affect such behavioral changes.

Thanyawan Kanjana-alongkorn (1999) investigates the spread of “body and mind” alternative medical innovation in Thai society. It is found that for aspects of innovation or message about body and mind in medical terms, receivers regarded it as holistic health by putting equal importance on body and mind in the prevention and treatment of sicknesses. It was a medical pluralism, emphasizing on creating life immunity system by using natural approaches. Senders or information sources knew the issue well and were specialized in science and alternative medicine. Channels carrying body and mind messages to receivers were unique and efficient. Most receivers were middle-class people with high education and income. These people drastically changed their lifestyle according to western consumerism trends, putting

their health at stake. These components have made it possible to spread the body and mind guidelines up until the present.

Thasanee Meewan (1999) investigates the creation and consumption in life phenomenon and duty of mass media. It is found that body and mind was a symbolic phenomenon related to health and nostalgia to return to nature and folk wisdom. It is also revealed that body and mind consumption of the middle class was for therapy, health and implicit alternatives as class-specific. Duties of mass media included dissemination of knowledge, concept or ideal, new alternatives and public forum.

Nevertheless, body and mind is a phenomenon telling Thai society that health crisis is going on, driving people to seek new alternatives to solve problems. It is a real crisis of people who wish to define a new trend of health that regards health as a whole person, not just a matter of public health personnel and drugs. The middle class have become an economic and cultural force in Thai society. The formation of new awareness among the middle class through body and mind phenomenon makes the trend to become a dimension of community. The Body and Mind Magazine has become a medium that members use to create a shared community and open alternative space, which reverse ideas could be formed and flow out to the public. In addition, the new alternative also challenges three powers. Firstly, it is the market authority because these middle class people feel that market mechanisms take advantages of consumers. They are also profit-oriented, disregarding health and environment as well as overusing chemicals. The result is an alternative market, providing health products. As for challenging state and specialists powers, the middle class accept body and mind regardless of what the state does. Furthermore, comments of specialists in institutionalized medicine could no longer be absolute and authoritative.

Body and mind has changed perspectives of health and sickness in the following issues.

- 1) A new perspective on sickness treatment. Body and mind points out strongly that getting better from sickness could take place by looking at health and sickness anew. Instead of looking at getting over from a sickness as a result of treatment, treatment and getting better from sickness should be looked upon as one thing.

2) Body and mind points out concretely that human dignity and treatment should not be a choice of one. Beauty and medicine could become one thing. The healing process of body and mind is humanistic, realizing that warmth, consideration and mental touches between a patient, a healer and community are as important as treatment regimen.

3) What body and mind gives to Thai society is the notion that cancer is no longer frightening and a death sentence. It is not a disease but oneself. Rhetoric of body and mind is thus against conventional rhetoric of the society. Modern medicine demonizes cancer, therefore, disease representation is another important mission to lessen suffering and fright of cancer.

4) Body and mind shows Thai society the possibility to reorganize the health system. The new system should be based upon a new definition beyond conventional medical framework.

5) Body and mind has returned health to the public (Komart Jungsathiansap, 1999: 43-44).

Sawat Kongkaew (2002) investigates factors contributing to broken-bone patients refusing treatment at Narathiwat Rachanakharin Hospital in Narathiwat Province. It is summarized that personal factors contributing to the refusal included age, gender, religion, status, education level, occupation, economic status, belief and attitude toward treatments of folk and professional doctors, and aspects and positions of broken bones. Supporting factors included belief, attitude of relatives, family, community, residence, distance, service system, social support, participation in taking care of patients of relatives, duration of sickness, duration of treatment, healing methods, satisfaction with healers, and cultural way of life. Additionally, prominent advantages of folk medical system were participation of relatives in looking after patients, convenience of services, warmth and friendliness. It was also recommended from the study that the Public Health Ministry provide policy guidelines to its agencies, e.g., self-care of the public, promoting knowledge and understanding via different media by taking differences in language, culture and livelihood of the public into consideration. It should also encourage the incorporation of folk wisdom in treatment, which would be another health care alternative of the people.

Nitaya Sricharoenjira (2003) investigates alternative medicine in private medical centers in Bangkok. It is found that most of the centers providing the services had 200 beds and over, located in the inner and middle parts of the city. The tendency to expand services was 86%, especially after 1999 when Medical Act 2542 B.E. and Medical Center Act 2541 B.E. were amended, providing channels and roles of alternative medicine to enter the service system legally. There were 2 types of services: (1) integrated into modern medicine, mostly in rehabilitation science, and (2) separated as another agency. Advantages of this incorporation were that there was an opportunity for alternative medicine to develop itself and users could make decisions to use services freely. There were 3 types of alternative medicine that were incorporated into the system, namely, traditional Thai and Chinese medicine, and natural therapy. Reference groups, with certificates and expertise certified Service providers. After the number of users had been increased, almost all of the medical centers publicized the services and brought in marketing strategies for public relations. The study also revealed that the factors for providing alternative medical services in the centers were needs of users and popularity in treatment methods to solve other health problems, particularly chronic or serious ones, that modern medicine could still not provide the answers. It was also a response to the right of self-care of individuals, particularly among new generations, who had stepped beyond modern medicine and looked for more natural paths of healing. Another factor of incorporation was the strength of alternative medicine. It could be seen that resistance from modern medicine had been lessened, seeking cooperation and applying advantages of alternative medicine to supplement the modern one.

From reviewing the above studies, there are enabling factors for patients to choose alternative medical treatments. They include gender, age, educational level, relatives and friends, economic status, aspects and severity of sickness, service provision, service providers, characteristics of services, and media that patients are exposed to. These factors define choices to heal sicknesses.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

The investigation on alternative medicine in Thai society: a case study of Balavi Natural Health Center divides the contents into 3 parts: service providers, service users, and aspects of services. The three factors contribute to selecting treatment services at the center.

1) Service providers

This part includes biography of the founders and history of the center, which includes objectives, concepts, operational principles and qualifications of service providers, e.g., building trust in patients and convincing them to accept the treatments.

2) Service users or patients

- Predisposing factors or qualifications of services users, e.g., age, gender, educational level, or socio-economic status

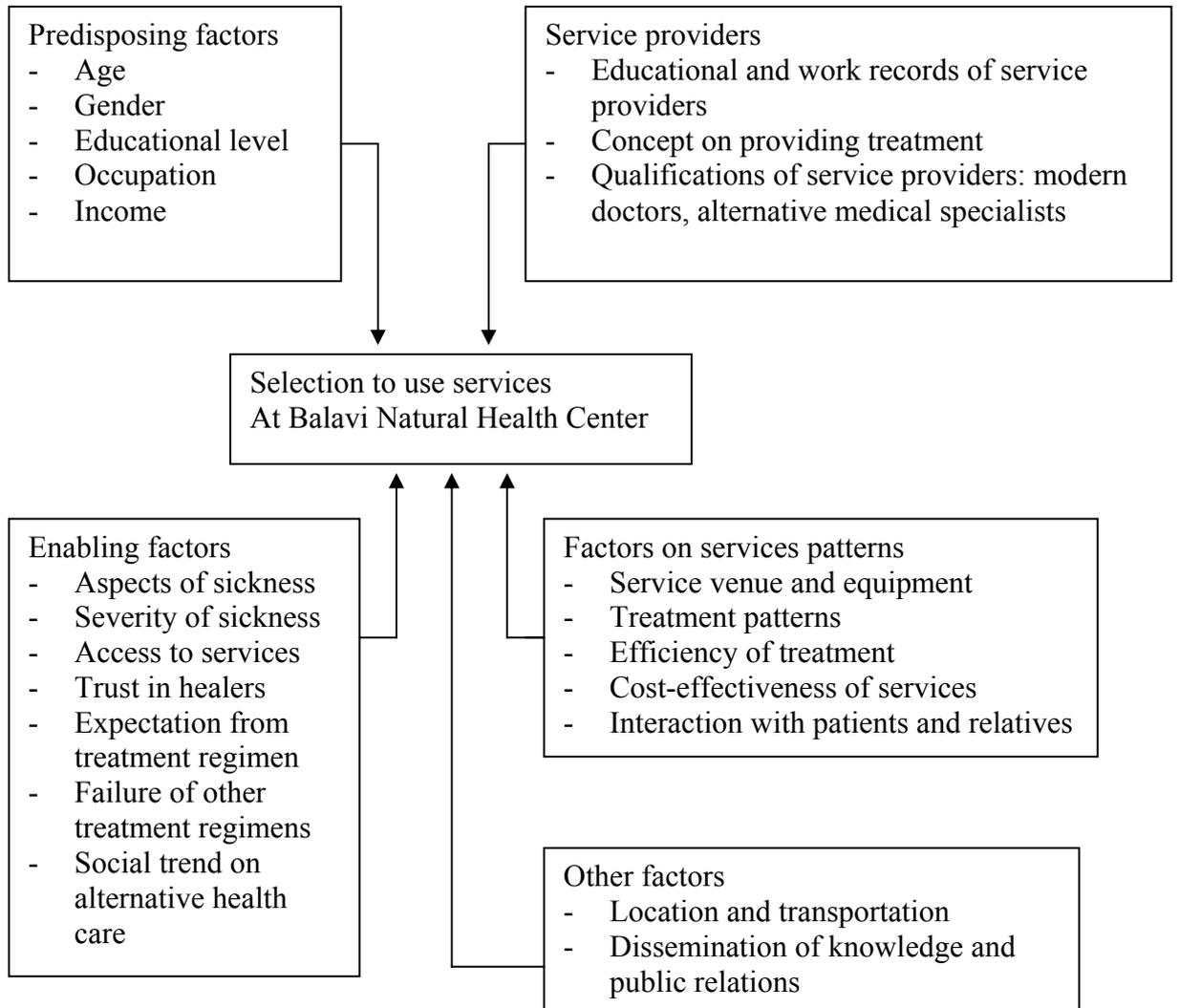
- Enabling factors contributing to the selection to use services at the center, e.g., aspects of sickness, severity of ailments, expectation from treatments, satisfaction and thoughts of patients in selecting this kind of treatment.

3) Aspects of services

- Aspects of service provision in the center, location, travel access, and expenditure

- Other services, e.g., disseminating knowledge to the public in addition to health care and treatment

The Conceptual Framework Factors affecting the decision to use services at Balavi Natural Health Center.



CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Methodology

The investigation on alternative medicine in Thai society: A case study of Balavi Natural Health Center employs a qualitative research method. Observations and in-depth interviews are utilized to obtain the data. The interviews are conducted on the doctors managing the center and the population group who are patients seeking treatments at the center in order to uncover the types of maladies that make them come to use services at the center.

3.2 Selection of the Study Area

The Balavi Natural Health Center is selected for this investigation due to the following reasons.

1) The health center is relatively popular in providing alternative health treatment because it has integrated the arts and sciences of health care from various places by selecting only the parts that could be explained by scientific health principles and efficient in treatment, so that they could be used to promote health care, cure ailments and rehabilitate patients for maximum benefits to services users and according to holistic treatment.

2) The founder of the center is a modern medical doctor, but has incorporated alternative medical treatment with modern medicine. Furthermore, it is interesting to know the concepts of setting up the center and its operational guidelines.

3) There are sufficient patients seeking treatment at the center, so that enough data could be collected for analysis.

4) The center has been in operation for a long time, which could be regarded as a stable alternative medical center that could exist by itself.

3.3 The Target Groups of the Study

There are three target groups involved in this study, namely, Balavi Natural Health Center and its service providers, its customers, and public health officials interested in alternative medicine. The details are as follows:

3.3.1 The founders and operators of the center are Medical Doctor Banchob Junhasavasdikul and Medical Doctor Lalita Theerasiri (or Natha Junhasavasdikul), who are modern medical doctors interested in incorporating alternative medical therapy with modern medical treatment.

3.3.2 There are 157 customers participating in natural health therapy programs, which are divided as follows:

1) There are 124 cases participating in the programs from January to September, 2001 or before the start of data collection, and 17 cases are selected for in-depth investigation.

2) There are 33 cases participating in the programs during the data collection period or from October to December, 2001, and 20 cases are chosen for in-depth investigation.

3.3.3 There are 7 public health officials interested in alternative medicine, consisting of five medical doctors interested in providing information about alternative medicine and two medical doctors who incorporate acupuncture with modern medical treatment. The seven doctors are working at King Mongkut and Vichaiyuth Hospitals.

3.4 Data Collection Process

3.4.1 Document research is involved with surveying studies on alternative medicine, health care and selecting medical services of Thai people as well as concepts on alternative medicine.

3.4.2 Survey of study area. When it is found that there is an interesting place providing natural health care and therapy in Bangkok, where access to collecting data is easy and the treatment is a combination of modern and alternative medicine from the East and West, Balavi Natural Health Center is selected. Before the data are

collected, contact to the owner of the center is made to seek official permission to collect data at the venue. The data collection covers the center, its founders, customers and treatment patterns.

3.4.3 During the field data collection, the following techniques are used.

1) Non-participatory observation. The observation is made at the center, covering its physical characteristics, patterns of therapy and behaviors of service users or customers.

2) Informal interview is conducted with officers of the center, customers and their relatives. What derived from the informal interview is information about thoughts on health care patterns of the general public.

3) In-depth interview is conducted with the founders of the center, customers and public health officials interested in alternative medicine. During the interview, interviewees are informed of who the researcher is, what information is needed and how the data would be used. The objectives of the interview must be clear in order to build trust and interviewees would be willing to provide necessary information.

Before interviewing the founders and operators of the center, a contact to collect the data was made through the Institute of Language and Culture for Rural Development, Mahidol University. After the permission was granted, a rapport was established by introducing the researcher and informing the objectives of the study. Data collection at the center would take three months from October to December, 2001. The contents would cover information about the center, patterns of treatment, operation concepts, service aspects, knowledge dissemination, raising awareness on health care among the public, factors contributing for the existence of the center, and operational problems. An interview guide was used during the interview. The interview took place many times and a tape recorder was used with the permission of the interviewees.

As for customers, the data were collected from only customers participating in the natural health programs, which were divided into two parts. Part one involved those participating in the programs before the data collection was launched, from January to September, 2001. There were 124 cases and the data included sex, age and ailments. Out of this number, 17 were selected for in-depth interview by phone to

obtain reasons and facts from receiving services. Sex, age and aspects of sickness were considered in selecting customers so that different perspectives of information could be obtained. Initially, interview by phone was problematic in terms of trust. However, after the purposes of the interview were informed and how the information would be crucial to the study, mutual trust was gradually formed. Interviewees were more open because communication was not face-to-face. The second part of interviewing customers was carried out when the data collection was launched from October to December, 2001. This involved 33 customers and 20 of them were selected for in-depth investigation. The interview was conducted while customers were waiting for the services or on appointment and it took about half an hour. Some interesting cases might take one and a half hours to two hours or the interview took many times. The focus of the interview was on aspects of sickness, health care and treatment, decision to seek treatment at the center, results of the treatment, and satisfaction with treatment.

Interviewing modern medical doctors interested in alternative medicine was carried out at King Mongkut and Vichaiyuth Hospitals. Some of the doctors have incorporated alternative treatment, such as, acupuncture with modern medicine. Other topics included trends of alternative medicine in Thailand and implementation of alternative medicine. The interview took approximately an hour for each doctor.

3.4.4 Data collection and data analysis, the data from document research and fieldworks were categorized into 4 groups. The first one is about the center, which includes its geographical data, administrative structure and personnel, and patterns of treatment. The second part is the information about the center's founders and the establishment of this alternative medical center. The third part is the information of its customers and the final part contains comments of modern medical doctors interested in alternative medicine. The data are then analyzed by using related theories and the analysis results are presented in the form of description.

3.5 Duration of the Study

The investigation on alternative medicine in Thai society started from July, 2001 to October, 2002 with the following details.

Preparation step includes preliminary surveys and document research, which took three months from July to September, 2001.

Data collection step includes collecting data in fieldwork, which took three months from October to December, 2001.

Data verification and analysis step includes verifying and analyzing the data as well as getting additional data, if necessary. After the data are analyzed, the results are classified and written up for the research committee for comments.

3.6 Limitation of the Study

There are some limitations from carrying out this investigation as follows:

3.6.1 Limitation of customers or service users. It is difficult to interview customers because each day they have to rotate having therapy activities continuously. Furthermore, the duration of health promotion and natural therapy programs is not on the daily basis and the activities of each program are held for ten consecutive days. In addition, some patients are not ready to reveal the information concerning their sickness or are still unable to give answers from such a therapy. Therefore, the researcher has to wait for patients in the following programs. Sometimes when patients have completed a ten-day program, they simply stop coming, so the data are disconnected.

3.6.2 Limitation of the researcher. Because the researcher is a full-time nurse, it is difficult to allocate her time to collect the data. Due to the temporal limitation, good opportunities to obtain essential data have been missed, such as, when the data have to be collected upcountry. In such a case, it is not possible to comply, which is another reason why some information is incomplete.

CHAPTER 4

CONCEPTS AND OPERATIONAL PROCESS OF BALAVI NATURAL HEALTH CENTER

4.1 History and Background of Balavi Natural Health Center

The following topics about the center would be investigated in an attempt to know more about the center.

4.1.1 History and Background of the Founder

The founder of Balavi Natural Health Center is Dr. Banchob Junhasavasdikul, M.D. He graduated from the Faculty of Medicine, Ramathibodi Hospital in 1973 (Batch 4). He was an intern in Nakhon Ratchasima Province for one year. After graduation, he worked at Kaeng Khro District General Hospital in Chaiyaphum Province for one year.

During the early years of his work, it was called the Ping Pong Diplomacy Period, when China first opened its diplomatic door to the world and President Richard Nixon of the United States visited the country. Medical relationship between the East and the West was open. People all over the world were very excited about surgery by using acupuncture method as anesthetic and acupuncture caught the global attention. Dr. Banchob was also interested in the science and went to China to study it at Chinese Medical Institute, Dongzhimen, Beijing, for one year. He has brought the science into practice at the center until today.

In addition, he has written numerous articles about natural health care and has them published in several magazines, e.g., Maticcho Weekly, Praew and POP Magazines. Moreover, he was a speaker of “Natural Health”, a television program on UBC Channel 7 between 2.00 – 3.00 p.m. every Saturday.

Dr. Natha Junhasavasdikul, also known as Dr. Lalita Dhirasiri, is another person who has worked side by side with Dr. Banchob in establishing and managing the center. She graduated from the Faculty of Medicine, Ramathibodi Hospital, Mahidol University and obtained a certificate in acupuncture from Dong Zhi Men Hospital, Beijing.

After graduating from Mahidol University, she was an intern for a year and after graduating from China, she was a physician and acupuncturist at Chan Muang Polyclinic. She has practiced acupuncture in Thailand for over 16 years now. In addition, she is also a columnist in Khwan Ruan Magazine, writing articles about natural health to prevent illnesses and treatments by means of food, physical exercise, yoga and drug for seven years.

4.1.2 Origin, Concept and Principles of Balavi Natural Health Center

Alvin Toffler, author of such books “Future Shock” and “The Third Wave” which influence thinking of the times wrote about power. “This age is the dawn of power movement. We are in the period when all power structures that seize the world are scattering. A completely new power structure is forming in every class of human society, be they in supermarkets, banks, offices of administrators, churches, universities, home as well as in health area.”

The above statement is compared with power of an individual in overcoming sicknesses to remain in good health. In the past, to overcome sicknesses, we directly confronted them with violence, that is, to use surgery knives and infectious drugs to deal with tumors and diseases. It seemed that the more we fought, the more resistant new diseases became. The powerful figures in health territory during the golden age of conventional medicine were physicians, who were like powerful generals. However, when the middle class became prosperous, merchants and businessmen could earn huge amount of money. Their financial power could in reverse negotiate different areas, including health. Their financial power could buy the best medical services for their own health and those around them.

Nonetheless, in Dr. Banchob's opinion, money is not a means to buy true health, if without knowledge on health care, learning about roles of foods and changes of health overview.

“By the late 20th century, the center of power spread to health region. Physicians were no longer gods in white gowns. Hospitals were not the only and last places where health lovers would inevitably depend. In the information age, health care topics are easy for interested individuals to acquire. Health programs on television and radio and health information in various media make viewers/readers more clever and aware of illness prevention. Every magazine has a health column and health journals are also available. Access to these sources and a perspective has returned power of health care to the public. It only takes curiosity, inquisitiveness, perseverance, tolerance and determination. Knowledge is a new god protecting your health and exists in yourselves.”

The concept of establishing the health center of Dr. Banchob (From Introduction of the book, “Detoxification Tour: Application of folk wisdom and new natural care, vol.4) stemmed from the fact that each year Thailand has paid huge sums of money to buy drugs, which is a defensive medical trend. New health problems are derived from overeating or disproportionate consumption, stress, restlessness and self-acceleration, causing various health problems, such as, heart diseases, hypertension, high cholesterol and obesity. Moreover, western medicine solves health problems by medication and hospitals accommodate and lessen suffering from illnesses. At the same time, people neglect their health, assigning the responsibility to the hospital. They assign the hospital not only healing wounds and sicknesses but also their health and well-being. In fact, it is us who have the responsibility to do so, but we give homage to physicians so much that we do not see the importance of ourselves. When we are healthy, we never think of how not to go to the hospital and depend on physicians. The founder of the center was aware of this problem. Therefore, he tried to convince people to look after their health in time of good health or some illnesses. One way of practices was through the assistance of natural health, returning our body and mind to nature and letting nature cure ourselves.

From Toffler's concepts, Dr. Banchob has adjusted service patterns of the center. A part of them is of modern medicine, but the treatment patterns focus on

changes of eating habit and natural health lifestyle. It does not emphasize only on treatment and its results on the body or the role of modern medicine but also on holistic views of health in physical, mental, spiritual and social terms. Furthermore, patients must take part in deciding on their destiny while physicians provide them information and treatment. It is a patient-oriented technique emphasizing on natural therapy to enhance immunity without being against medical principles. Modern medicine alone may not create trust in the general public. What are important for treatment is more knowledge, treatment alternatives and health care concepts to transfer to others.

As a modern physician, Dr. Banchob is well aware that new medical alternatives must be sought. His practice has been to use as little drug as possible since graduation. As times go by, he has realized the results of natural health in combination with modern medicine. This is the origin of Balvani Natural Health Center, set up to serve patients in the age of holistic and humanistic treatment. The treatment principles of the center is to combine science and arts of health care from the East and West, filtering only reasonable and effective parts for health promotion, treatment and rehabilitation.

4.1.3 Development of Balavi Natural Health Center

After Dr. Banchob and Dr. Lalita graduated from China and returned to Thailand, they did not work in government hospitals. Instead they and their friends from Faculty of Medicine, Ramathibodi Hospital, established a polyclinic in Bang Khae area. Here, acupuncture was applied to treat patients. At the same time, Dr. Banchob opened another clinic called Khlong Prapa Clinic, which is now the Balavi Natural Health Center. It was open during the evening hours and acupuncture was also applied. Patients in the initial stage were those who were hopeless from hospitals, such as, those suffering from paralysis, migraine, back pains, knee problems or insomnia.

After 5-6 years of practice, he noticed that the effectiveness of acupuncture was less than that in China, which in assumption was due to different environment. In China, people were closer to nature, so physical balance was not much disturbed.

Furthermore, food contamination in Thailand was rampant and their eating habit was not good, resulting in loss of physical balance.

During that time, megavitamin treatment was popular. He studied the subject and wanted to disseminate the knowledge on natural health to the public. He wrote a book and founded Ruamtasana Publishing House. The first book was “Treating illness with finger tips (acupressure)”. After that, he seriously investigated printed documents on natural health. During the age of Newly Industrialized Countries (NICs), health patterns had been changed. Overeating was widespread, causing physical deterioration. He then focused on the topic, translating others’ works in the initial stage, until knowledge was formed. Some theories he himself had put into practice before telling other patients to do at home. However, preparations and practices of some topics were not easy for patients because they were very complicated, for instance, fasting and detoxification. He then set up treatment courses at the center and organized health tours (about 9-10 years). In the initial stage, each tour attracted about 20 people but it was later about 80. At the same time, he disseminated knowledge on natural health by writing a health column on the topic in Matichon Weekly Magazine and the articles were later published as a book by Ruamtasana Publishing House, with initiation from Mr. Sathian Chanthimathon.

The center has been in operation for about ten years, which is an addition of Khlong Prapa Clinic (established about 20 years ago). It was and still is the office of Dr. Banchob. The clinic is founded legally with license, but the center is set up as a health club like other fitness centers, which do not require licenses.

The word “Balavi” is a Pali-Thai word, derived from “Balava”, meaning seedlings or a new growth. It is the principle and concept of nature. The good part is the seed. When a sprout grows, the seed provides food to the young seedling. The food is full of vitamins, which is the treatment principle of the center.

The original founders of the center are Dr. Banchob, Dr. Lalita and Khun Wallee Junhasawasdikul. Khun Wallee is the elder sister of Dr. Banchob. The name Balavi is related to Khun Wallee. It is a coinage between Balava and Wallee. Khun Wallee was the owner of the traditional Thai style house, which was rented to Dr. Banchob. Later he bought the house and uses it as the center until now.

4.2 Geo-graphical Aspects of Balavi Natural Health Center

Location

The center is located in a residential area at 191/3 Soi Ranong 1, Rama VI Road, Phayathai District, Bangkok. It is situated near an entrance to Rama VI Expressway and Samsen Railway Station, which is convenient to get to.

Structure of the center

The center is divided into two parts. One part is used for the clinic and the other is for catering natural health services.

The clinic is a two-story building located on Soi Ranong 1. The second floor is used for offices of physicians, while the first floor is used as the clinic. There is a big sign with the name “Balavi” on it. The entrance on the first floor is made of glass with the name “Khlong Prapa Clinic” and office hours written on it. Next is the waiting room with magazines, a television set, an indoor aquarium and beautiful paintings on the walls. In front of the examination rooms is an information counter with three officers in charge, including a professional nurse, an accountant and a clerk. On the counter sit records of today’s patients and results of laboratory examinations. On the wall behind the counter are shelves displaying drugs and herbal medicine as well as vitamins and food supplements. One part behind the counter is used to keep records of all patients. If a patient has not come to use services for five consecutive years, his/her record will be discarded.

There are three examination rooms. In each room, there are a bed and a desk for the physician to interview patients. On the desk lie modern medical equipment, such as, a stethoscope, proctoscope, a lever, a flashlight and printed materials on natural health. For measuring blood pressure, it is usually conducted by the nurse, but sometimes the doctor does it her/himself.

There is also a spacious room set aside for physical therapy. Besides the equipment and an examination counter, there are three more beds for giving saline solution and acupuncture to patients. Between the beds are curtains for privacy.

The Balavi Natural Health Center is located in a separate building behind the clinic, with another building (a house) in between. The center is located in a beautiful

traditional Thai house and it is an extension for the purpose of providing therapy. The center is divided into the following parts. Near the entrance is a kitchen and a restaurant outside, with tables and chairs for patients, relatives and outsiders. The foods include both health and ordinary foods. Next to the restaurant is the traditional Thai house which is made from teak. The building has two stories and the first story is an expansion so that the area could be of maximum use.

On the ground floor of the Thai house, there are two entrances. One is next to the restaurant and the other is closed to a yard. There are three glass walls in the front and the back is a lecture and activities room. The front room is designed as a fitness with all types of equipment with officers providing services and facilitate users at the counter. They are a public relations officer and five sports scientists. Additionally, private lockers are also provided. Behind the counter is a door leading to the lecture and activities room. It is air-conditioned and carpeted, with tables, chairs and other lecturing equipment. There is also a piano for music therapy, a restroom and a staircase leading to the second floor.

There are two ways going to the second floor. The first is through the staircase in the lecture room and the other one is through another staircase in the front closed to the swimming pool. On this floor, there is a long hall separating the floor into two compartments. At the end of the hall sits a Buddha image for patients to pay homage to and to calm their minds. The right compartment of the hall is the massage room for women with three beds and two rest beds on the floor. There are two windows over the heads of the beds with mosquito screens. At the back of the room is a bath and restroom for cleaning after massage. The left compartment of the hall is the massage room for men, with the same composition as that in the women's room. In addition to the traditional Thai house, other areas in the center are as follows:

A whirlpool or Jacuzzi bath for hydrotherapy activities. It is a one-story building connected to the swimming pool. There is a shower room, a sauna, a cold pool, two herbal saunas, and private lockers. The top of the building is a Chinese architecture. Behind the swimming pool is another two-story building. The top floor is made from glass with windows and a staircase connected to the traditional Thai house. The building is used for yoga practices.

The yard in front of the Thai house is grassy and shady with decorative plants around the yard. There is also a big tree near the swimming pool. The yard is used for solar bath, Chi kong exercise and listening to sermons.

Along the path way from the restaurant to the Thai house, there are sufficient chairs for sitting and relaxing. There are some potted plants and a bulletin board publicizing the center's activities and other useful information. In front of the restaurant is a stand selling chemical and pesticide-free vegetables for the public.

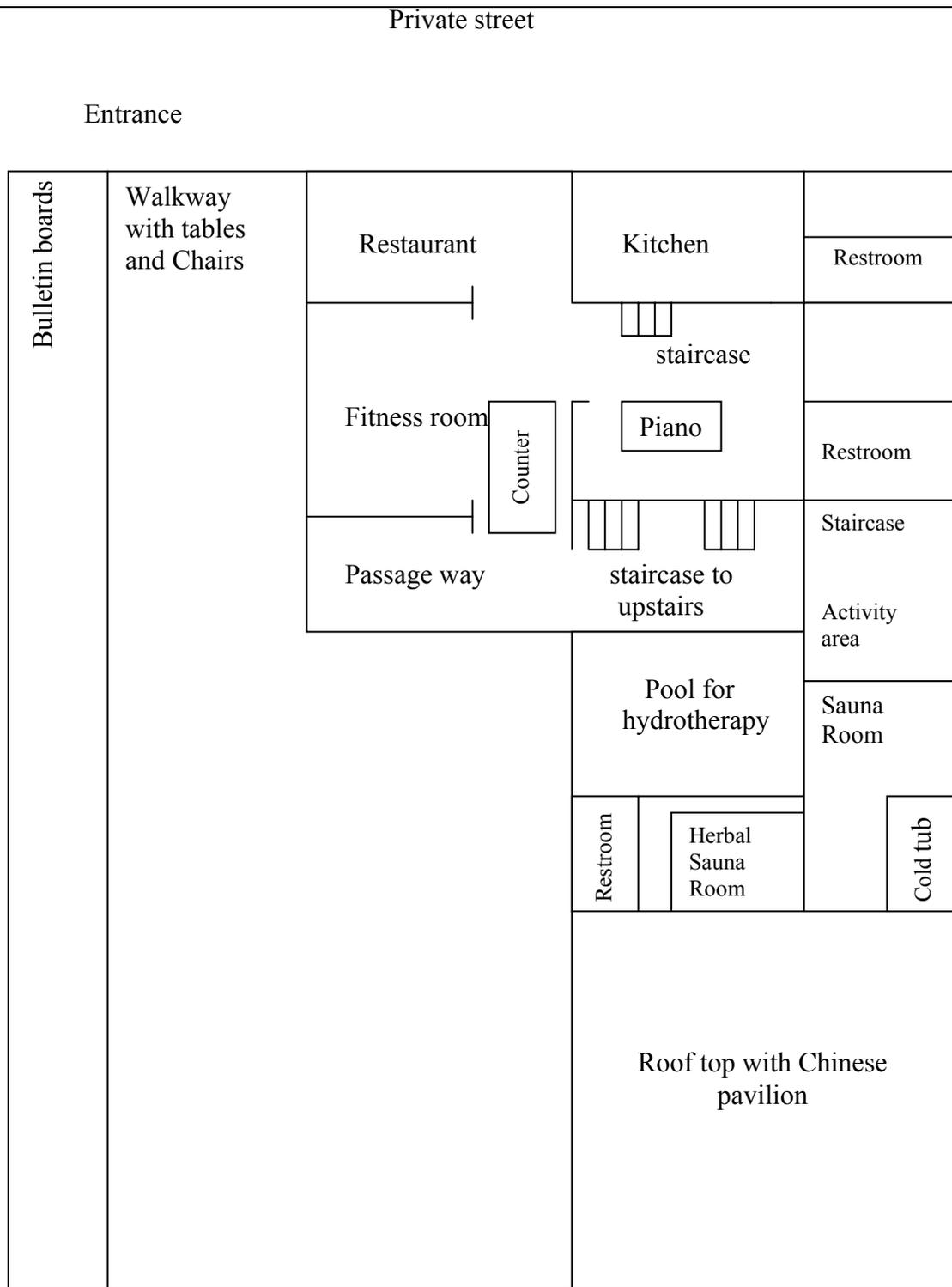


Figure 1. Diagram of the first floor of the center

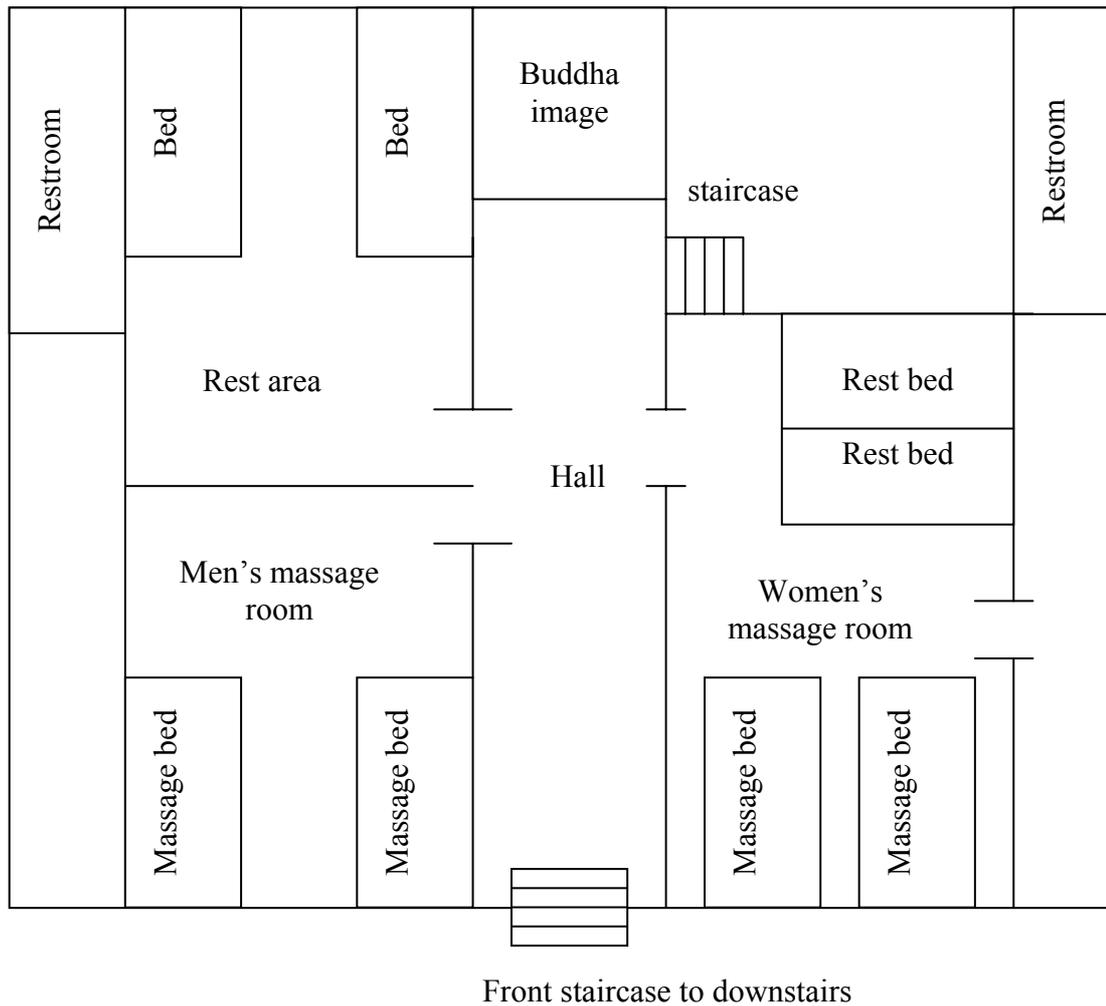


Figure 2. Diagram of the second floor of the center

In addition to the clinic and the Balavi center, there is also a shop called “Body and Mind Shop”, located at the two-story building next to the clinic on the Rama VI Road. It is on the ground floor, selling books on natural health written by the two physicians and published by Ruamtasana Publishing House, ready and non-ready foods, pesticide-free vegetables, and some equipment used at the center. On the second floor is the office of the center, consisting of the finance department in charge of salaries, the accounting department responsible for equipment inventories and purchasing pharmaceutical products, and a messenger. This floor also houses the Centennial Club, whose work is in coordination with the Balavi Center.

Personnel of Balavi Natural Health Center

There are about 31 personnel working for the center, excluding Dr. Banchob and Dr. Lalita.

For Khlong Prapa Clinic, there is a professional nurse responsible for carrying out orders from physicians, for instance, injection, saline solution, drug dispensary and provision of information on health and natural health to patients. There is one Chinese doctor, whose duty is to carry out physicians' orders. She received a medical license from China but not from Thailand, so she could not give patients examinations. Additionally, there are one part-time nurse assistant, a cashier and a clerk who could provide information on some topics on therapy and help out general documents.

Personnel of Balavi Natural Health Center are as follows:

A public relations officer and secretary and one secretary assistant are in charge of giving information on and publicizing the center, producing documents and contacting external agencies. They work during week days from 8.00-17.00 hours and on Saturdays from 8.00-12.00 hours.

There are five sports scientists, 2 males and 3 females, with bachelor degree on sports science. They are responsible for taking care of customers and advising patients to carry out natural health activities, for instance, physical exercise, Chi kong, solar bath, hydrotherapy, aqua-aerobics, and massage. Sports scientists could provide all types of physical activities and have knowledge on anatomy, physical exercise and primary aids. They could provide patients correct information on exercise. They work five days a week and the two days off do not necessarily have to be Saturdays and Sundays. They work in three shifts: morning shift with therapy course from 7.00 – 15.00 hours, without therapy course from 8.30-17.00 hours; late shift from 10.00 – 18.30 hours; and afternoon shift from 12.30-20.00 hours.

In the food section, there are nine officers responsible for cooking health foods for patients and services users at the center. Of these, there is a nutritionist overseeing food production according to natural health principles, while the rest are in charge of health and non-health foods for patients and outsiders.

There are two housekeepers in charge of cleanliness of the center and one of them has to clean the clinic in the evening from 16.30-19.30 hours. There is also one mechanic in charge of water, electricity, pool and yard, and a part-time gardener working on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Sundays.

As for the office, there is a finance officer responsible for paying salaries, income and expenditure of the clinic and the center. An accountant is in charge of inventories and purchasing drugs and medical equipment. There is also a messenger delivering documents, going to banks and sometimes driving.

At the “Body and Mind Shop, there are two sales clerks, selling products of the center, e.g., books, videos, foods and pesticide-free vegetables.

Furthermore, the center also hires a supervisor overseeing the operations of the center and transferring orders from physicians to officers in different sections and departments.

4.3 Services of the Balavi Natural Health Center

The center was established to provide health care and treatment services. Therefore, patterns of services are crucial to service users, which could be presented as follows:

4.3.1 Health Promotion and Prevention

The World Health Organization states that health promotion is a competency-increasing process to enable man to control health-affecting factors. And promote better health, not only treatment during sickness but also states and fundamental resources that are favorable to better health (cited from New Health Promotion Strategies, Public Policy for Health, 1998: 106).

The center provides services on health promotion and prevention as follows:
Natural health course

The course is designed to provide services to patients and individuals intending to get natural health therapy. It is under the supervision of modern physicians. Doctors provide advice and patients have to come to get services

themselves. Three principles of natural health are used: diet control, stress-reducing exercise, and meditation.

Most of the target group are cancer patients and a part of them are those requiring detoxification. It is based on the belief that many health problems are from body cells being unable to eliminate toxins from foods we overeat and inefficient metabolism. These toxins cause high cholesterol, hypertension, diabetics, deteriorating joints, allergy, obesity, stress and cancer. There are many kinds of toxins including free radicals. Detoxification is another way to get rid of them by refraining from eating meat, sugar, fat and rice starch. They should eat fresh fruits and vegetables, relying on vitamins, hormones and fruit and vegetable enzymes to detoxification. Furthermore, meditation would reduce metabolism and toxin as well as rehabilitating health.

For cancer, it is another indication of failure of body systems, particularly the immune system. Normally, cancer cells take place in our bodies everyday, but we have the immune system to eliminate them, so cancerous tumors would become zero. When we become stressful or receive too much toxins in the body or take certain medication, the immune system would be suppressed and cancer would surface. Natural health therapy to counter cancer is exercise, hydrotherapy, solar bath, meditation and self-motivation and encouragement.

Activities of a Natural Health Course

The course is designed for the suitability of age, ailment and symptom of each patient. The activities are as follows:

Diet control by eating health foods or foods for detoxification

Listening to lectures on fasting for health, meditation and health, cooking for detoxification, health foods for daily life, practices for cancer treatment, benefits of vitamins and food supplements, hydrotherapy and daily life, natural agriculture, and yoga for health.

Mental exercise for treatment

Floor and hydro-aerobics

Yoga, Tai chi and solar bath

Music therapy

Healing symptoms according to natural health therapy

The center would design courses in advance on a yearly basis. Physicians would specify the dates and months for the following year and there are about 18 courses per year.

Preparation

Officers would prepare name lists of applicants, with details of an applicant's symptoms and activities during the therapy. Activities differ from individual to individual, depending on his/her symptoms, sickness and consideration of physicians. However, basic activities are usually similar, with few differences, such as, mind control or detoxification by using coffee.

Duration of the Course

Each course may last 5 to 10 days. During application, an applicant must tell his/her name, family name, gender, age, occupation, religion, vegetarian diet, address, telephone number, and office.

The expenditure for participating in the health course is as follows. For a ten-day course, the fee is 29,500 baht with a free four-month health membership costing 10,400 baht. For a five-day course, the fee is 18,500 baht with a free two-month health membership costing 5,200 baht.

Every participant must wear his/her name tag. Officers would tell each participant what activities to take and when. Everyone would receive documents about natural health, a timetable of activities and a notebook to jot down details of activities. The center allows relatives to attend lectures and carry out activities with patients, so that they could help them doing at home. The center regards that natural therapy is a patient-centered approach. Patients must practice by themselves, which is different from the hospital. For treatment at the hospital, a patient just brings him/herself in and the hospital can do anything with him/her.

Activities while Attending a Natural Health Course

Detoxification is a process of discharging toxins from the body, which could be carried out through various means

- Kidneys by drinking a lot of water. Water would destroy and carry wastes out of the body.

- Breathing. Breathing should be trained to become effective so that the lungs could work at their maximum capacity.

- Excrement

- Skin

- Activating the lymphatic system

What an attendant has to observe during detoxification is as follows:

Food. The food is prepared by the center, which is under the supervision of physicians.

Day 1 Preparation. Rice is prohibited, allowing protein, fresh fruits and vegetables.

Day 2-3 Fasting. Eating fruits the whole day, either guavas or papayas

Day 4-8 Eating. Fresh fruits for breakfast, a plate of vegetables for lunch, vegetables and mushrooms for dinner (no rice or meat)

Day 9-10 Quitting. Rice is allowed. Fruits and cereals for breakfast, half a plate of rice, a plate of vegetables and 100 grams of meats for either lunch or dinner.

Remarks: For cancer patients, fasting is not allowed, but the food would be the type that is against or resistant to cancer.

Prana Breathing. It is a breathing method of Tibetans because Tibet is located in a high altitude with low air pressure, thin air and cold weather. Prana breathing would enable the body to get more oxygen and increase body heat. The practice must be carried out at a well-ventilated place, e.g., an open room or under a tree. It should not be done in an enclosed place. The breathing must be slow. If breathing quickly, lung pressure would increase and blood circulation would decrease, causing dizziness.

Waste elimination through feces. A feces is a waste and should not be retained in the large intestine for a long time. The intestine is composed of soft tissues, which could absorb the waste back into the tissues and blood streams. Excrement should be discharged from the body within 24 hours. We should eat foods rich in fibers. A feces is the food of bacteria and what bacteria excrete could become carcinogenic agents, causing colon cancer.

At the center, detoxification by using coffee is provided to service users. The clinic has exclusive rooms for this service, equipped with necessary instruments. They include a bed and a detoxifying tool containing 23-25 liters of warm water. The water is controlled by a temperature control device and should be about 94-104° F.

In coffee detoxification, one tablespoon of coffee is mixed with one liter of warm water. The liquid is put into the anus so that it could be in the rectum.

The purpose of coffee detoxification is to let black blood vessels in the large intestine absorb caffeine to the liver. The caffeine would then activate the liver to function well in discharging toxic waste from the body.

For healthy people, it is recommended that coffee detoxification be carried out 2-3 times a year. For sick people, it should be done according to their conditions. For cancer patients, it is recommended to do it everyday, which could be done at home. For cancer patients during chemotherapy and allergy patients, it should be done twice a day. However, colon enema is prohibited among cancer patients and people with hypertension and exhaustion because it would increase pressure in their bowels. For cancer patients, they could lose potassium easily through excretion.

Waste elimination through skin. Skin orifices serve as an outlet for perspiration, discharging waste from the body. To eliminate waste, the skin is rubbed to activate the circulation of the lymphatic system, which could be done as follows:

- 1) Soaking dried luffa in the water. Rub it from fingertips to shoulders and from tips of the feet to the thighs. Do the same with the front and the back of the body. The whole process takes about 3 minutes and it should be done twice a day, morning and evening before taking a shower.

- 2) Heat activation. It is another way to activate the lymphatic system, enabling white blood cells to function better. The ideal body temperature for maximum work capacity of white blood cells is over 37 degrees Celsius. Heat activation methods at the center are solar bath and herbal therapy and sauna.

Solar bath is to lie in the sun covering with banana leaves. The purpose is to discharge body waste through perspiration. Solar bath is carried out on a sunny day.

The equipments for solar bath include a bamboo bed covered with a white bedsheet, a small pillow made from water hyacinth, and banana leaves. Bathers put on swimming gears and rub their skin with olive oil containing in a green bottle laid in

the sun or open space. It is believed that olive oil in a green bottle could absorb heat from the sun well. Then bathers lie on the beds and officials cover their bodies with banana leaves from head to toes to induce perspiration. They turn over periodically.

Principles of Herbal Therapy and Sauna

The two share the same principle. When body temperature is high, heat and perspiration will be driven out. Sauna originated from Finland and Sweden. Sauna is an enclosed room with the temperature of 80 degrees Celsius. When entering a sauna, body temperature will not change according to the room temperature, but the body will maintain its temperature at 37 degrees Celsius. The reaction is that orifices are open to let perspiration out. One should stay in a sauna about 3-5 minutes per time because he/she could be dehydrated and faint due to internal organs having insufficient blood supply, which is harmful to the heart and brain. At the center, a cold tub is located in front of the sauna for patients to dip their bodies in after coming out, so that blood stream could be called to the center of the body. Heat would enliven the body and coldness would enable white blood cells to return to the body. Immunity increases when the body is in heat and it would be used when the body is in a cold place, making the body stronger. It is recommended that the whole process takes three times.

Herbal therapy is a Thai wisdom and the temperature is 40-60 degrees Celsius. Each time, it should take 5-10 minutes and coming out to the cold tub and it should be done 3 times, taking approximately half an hour.

Prohibitions of Sauna and Herbal Treatment

- 1) Pregnant women are prohibited because blood could not supply the fetuses
- 2) Heart patients with problem of blood supply to the brain, accept those under medication to control the symptom. Therefore, blood pressure should be checked, which should not exceed 140/90 mmHg and lower than 90/60 mmHg.

Chi Kong exercises is an ancient science that is related to or imitates nature and animals. It was discovered about 3,000 years ago. In the old days when medicine

and physicians were non-existent, people tried to invent healing methods because it was believed that everything had power, be they trees, mountains, seas or rivers. We had to learn how to take advantage of these natural powers. Nowadays, people are so materialistic that they forget their spirituality. Chi Kong exercise is like charging your battery. Chi is a dynamic life force existing in everyone and so we should activate this force. Chi occurs when we eat, drink and breathe. The principle is natural, creating internal balance, relaxation and peace, resulting in self-healing. While carrying out the exercise, one may break the wind, which is a way to drive out body waste. Finally, one would perspire, which could be very stinking. There might also be itches or pains, which are regarded as bringing out the ailments before they surface.

There are 3 steps of Chi Kong exercise

1) Preparation step. One should wear ordinary clothing and stay in a well-ventilated place without air-conditioners or fans. If eating, it should be done half an hour before starting the exercise. After the exercise, one should drink warm not cold water and rest about half an hour before taking a shower.

2) Practice step. One should try to create physical and mental balance and breathing.

3) Termination step.

An example of Chi Kong exercise: Arahat Standing Posture

Stand with your legs apart about your shoulders. Bend knees forward, relax and put all your weight to your buttock. Raise your arms to the waist level and breathe slowly and deeply to draw your Chi force to your hair pores. When breathing out, drive all body waste and ailments out through your palms and finger tips. Your palms and fingers would feel hot and numb when heat currents pass through. Remain practicing for half an hour or as long as you can.

Before ending posture. Slowly lower your hands until they are straight with the floor and hold each other. Breathe in to feel the power or mass and breathe out. Slowly separate your hands until they are parallel to your body. You would feel a pushing force in your hands.

Ending posture. Slowly lower and push your hands downward. Hold your hands into fists, breathe in and pull your arms until they are in a straight line with your shoulders. Slowly release your fists, exhale through your teeth and at the same time lower your arms and shoulders as well as release your clenches and push your palms down. This is the end of the posture. Then vigorously rub your palms together and put them against your face and neck. After that, pat your shoulders down to your finger tips and your legs to bring the force back to the body.

While practicing Chi Kong exercise, each one should keep a notebook and write down any changes before, during and after the exercise. Practitioners would know the changes themselves which also depends on their belief and faith.

Yoga is an ancient Indian science, originating about 4,000 years ago. It was found by yogis, who had to dwell in the forest and find healing ways that were least dependent on drugs. Yoga concentrates on breathing practice, body movement, eating, resting and meditation. Yoga is meant to unite body and mind to become a single unit. Benefits of yoga practice are as follows:

- Peace in heart and mind
- Power of mind, intelligence and love
- Power of mind over body and external world
- Advance knowledge on present and future events
- Control of mind and concentration power
- Emotional control; eliminating worries, arrogance, anger and fear
- Good health, beauty and longevity
- Eliminating illnesses and dangers from mental disorders.

Prohibitions of Yoga Practice

There is no prohibition except when one is too exhausted or without energy

Directions of yoga practitioners

- It should be done 1-2 hours after eating, depending on whether the meal is light or heavy.

- The best time is early morning or late afternoon
- The place should be well ventilated.

- Any attire providing flexible movement should be worn.
- If the floor is not carpeted, a thick mat or blanket should be placed to prevent knee and back aches.
- Yoga should be practiced slowly and gracefully. Breathing should be natural, without tense neck muscles. Quietness should be observed. After each posture is complete, a practitioner must lie down. It should be done slowly, especially people over 40 years of age.

There are many postures and each one is beneficial to the body. For maximum benefits, yoga should be practiced regularly and continuously.

Mind practice and meditation

Besides physical activities, the center also conducts mental activities and meditation because body and mind are equally important. A comparison is made about life that it is like a four-legged chair, comprising right eating, regular exercise, sufficient sleep and a peaceful mind. To stay healthy, immunity depends on genetics, good food, sufficient sleep, regular exercise, non-addictive substance consumption and a peaceful mind from meditation.

In mental practice, one must be well aware of what he is doing and attentive. The functions of mind are as follows:

- 1) Harboring emotion
- 2) Accumulating emotion
- 3) Improvising emotion
- 4) Knowing emotion

Emotion is what the mind thinks or recollects. A mind without training would make its owner restless.

Meditation is to train the mind to focus on one thing and to stop by following the breathing. During meditation, the mind must be made peaceful without thinking about external matters. To acquire meditation, consciousness must be static, residing in the present.

The sick should practice meditation because sometimes restlessness from ailments may be released in the forms of anger, violence or sadness, saddening those around them.

They need to change their mentality by changing a crisis in to an opportunity. Sickness should be regarded as a time to look after one's health after a long neglect. The past is gone forever. The best or worst could not be returned. The future has not come yet, no matter how hard we try to acquire. The present is with us and touchable. Therefore, we should focus on the present and do our best. We should regard that there are ups and downs in life. Everyone could be happy and sad, more or less depending on their actions. We should always be reminded that what could not be chosen are the date, place and causes of our death. It is customary that our bodies are walking toward deterioration and decay. No matter how hard we try to prevent, it could only prolong our death.

Stress induces unusual secretion of hormones, causing stress-related maladies as follows:

- 1) High cholesterol, hypertension and heart disease
- 2) Tense and narrowed small blood vessels
- 3) Oversecretion of digestive substance, causing gastritis
- 4) Pancreatic juice dysfunction, causing diabetics
- 5) Over secretion of hormones by the thyroid glands, causing poisoning
goiter
- 6) Likelihood of cancer

There are ways to overcome stress as follows:

- 1) Consulting with trusted friends when frustrated
- 2) Doing relaxing activities, such as, playing music, exercise or
planting
- 3) Getting away from the problem temporarily
- 4) Avoiding confrontation
- 5) Having enough rest
- 6) Being optimistic
- 7) Having a sense of humor
- 8) Practicing meditation
- 9) Consulting with a specialist or psychiatrist

The three correct status of mind from meditation as follows:

- 1) Stableness
- 2) Purenness
- 3) Activeness

The three qualifications of the mind are interdependent (from Buddhadas Bhikku).

Before meditation, the following preparations are required.

- 1) Preparing oneself by being determined, patient, persevering and constant
- 2) Preparing a safe place with a guidance
- 3) Preparing one's body by cleaning it and not being too full
- 4) Preparing one's mind by observing precepts, without having anger and hatred.

The outcomes of meditation are as follows:

- 1) Better health from enough rest
- 2) Becoming healthy from enough rest
- 3) Reducing obsessiveness and anger
- 4) Becoming more polite and generous
- 5) More understanding about the world
- 6) Becoming more active, lively and sporty
- 7) Becoming more friendly and warmer
- 8) Becoming more attentive to work
- 9) Becoming less stressful
- 10) Becoming more careful and thoughtful
- 11) Having better memories
- 12) Being in a good and pleasant mood
- 13) Working more efficiently and successfully
- 14) Reducing a crave for cigarettes, whiskey and addictive substances

Recommended foods

While having services on a natural health course, patients are advised to eat or avoid certain foods to reduce risks of illnesses.

White blood cells in our bodies attack diseases. If they are healthy, they could deal with diseases well. Consequently, we need to strengthen our immunity by leading a healthy life.

Cancer resistant foods

Foods that increase cancer risks include alcoholic drinks, salt, salty foods, red meat, eggs, grilled foods, animal fats, milk and milk products, sugar, coffee, food contaminants, cigarettes and monosodium glutamate, and so on.

Foods that reduce cancer risks include vegetables, fruits, carotene, vitamin C, minerals, cereals, complex carbohydrate plants, green tea and fiber-rich foods. Vegetables and fruits from the market might contain carcinogens, so it is safer to eat pesticide free fruits and vegetables.

1) The roles of β -carotene

- (1) Strengthening body cells to prevent cancer
- (2) Strengthening immunity

Beta-carotene is found in yellow and purple fruits and vegetable, such as, pumpkins, carrots, papaya, purple cabbages and beetroots

2) The roles of vitamin C

Vitamin C works against free radicals and strengthens immunity. Vitamin C compounds and ascorbic acids in nature are found in fresh fruits and fruit juices. Getting about 10 grams of vitamin C per day would strengthen white blood cells and stop hyaluronidase enzymes that separates cancerous cells, preventing the spread of cancer.

However, higher dosage of Vitamin C might cause upset stomach. The clinic of the center dispenses only four grams per day. Each capsule contains one gram, given to each patient four times a day for a period of one month. After that, the amount will be gradually increased to ten grams per day. In some urgent cases, an 18-gram liquid solution is applied through blood vessels, especially cancer patients

before and after having undergone chemotherapy treatment to strengthen their white blood cells.

Potassium

Minerals in our bodies contain sodium (Na) and potassium (K). Sodium is found in salt and potassium in seaweed, vegetables and all types of fruits, particularly bananas, oranges and potato peels.

The roles of potassium

Potassium is a necessary mineral for normal functions of muscles. Sodium and potassium would always be in reverse. Whenever sodium is high, potassium is low and vice versa. For strong immunity, the proportion of potassium and sodium should be 4:1. The dosage of potassium that enhances immunity is 5 mEq/ml.

One way to increase potassium is to eat a lot of vegetables and fruits. The center makes potassium soup for cancer patients. The ingredients of the soup are one cabbage, two carrots, 4-6 onions, two potato peels and 2-4 tomatoes.

In addition to the above items and activities of the course, there are still other activities which will not be mentioned here.

Patients must strictly follow the schedule of activities that the center provides, as shown in the following table.

Table 1. Activities for a natural health course

Time	Activities
07.00	Chi Kong and meditation
08.00	Breakfast
08.30	Morning exercise and Prana breathing
09.30	Lectures by Dr. Banchob or Dr. Lalita or other specialists. Topics vary from day to day
10.30	Coffee break Natural health treatments, e.g., acupuncture, saline and vitamin solutions
12.00	Lunch and rest Massage
15.00	Coffee break Afternoon exercise and sauna
18.00	Dinner

After dinner, all patients return home and return to the center the following day for five or ten days.

Symptoms during detoxification

The symptoms include nausea, vomit, muscle pains, headaches, exhaustion, bitter mouth, restlessness, drowsiness and stomach upset. To lessen the symptoms, they should drink a lot of water and rest. Sometimes pain killers may be taken.

4.3.2 Treatment at Balavi Natural Health Center

Doctor's visit

To visit a doctor, patients should call to make appointment or just come in for first timers. In general, officials would check appointments and prepare patients' records. For special activities like physical therapy, patients would be called because therapists are from outside. As for those provided saline solutions, they could come without appointment because the activity is carried out by a nurse. Normal appointment

for this group is once every five or seven days, which could be flexible. After one month, the patients must visit the doctors to have their blood checked.

The clinic does not keep daily statistics of service users, but the average is 20 to 30 patients per day.

Acceptance procedure

Before seeing the doctor, a new patient must fill in a form, telling name, surname, sex, age, address, office address and drug allergy. An official would measure his/her weight and height and a nurse would measure his/her blood pressure. After that, they can wait to see the doctor of his/her choice. The official would not ask his/her illness record.

Dr. Banchob and Dr. Lalita put an emphasis on talking with patients. They listen to their patients' stories attentively, willingly and unhurriedly. On average, each patient is allocated 30-40 minutes.

Every patient has his/her our record with information on personal history, sickness and orders of physicians. The record is kept at the clinic for five years. If a patients does not come for services for five consecutive years, his/her record will be discarded.

Appointment Card	
Khlung Prapa Clinic	
Name	No.....
1.....	Date
2.....	Date
3.....	Date
4.....	Date

Figure 3. Examples of the appointment card

Khlong Prapa Clinic	
Name Age Sex	
Home Address	
Office Address	
Drug Allergies	

Figure 2. Examples of the OPD card

Patients seeking treatment at the center suffer from different maladies, ranging from mild ailments, such as, a common cold, to serious illnesses, e.g., high cholesterol. Treatments are in line with modern medicine, i.e., modern drug-orientation. Nonetheless, most patients are suffering from cancer. Their treatments are as follows:

Patients’ record

When a cancer patient decides to have treatment at the center, the doctor will talk with him or his relatives in the examination room on the beginning of the sickness, past treatment, lab and x-ray results, what previous doctors’ suggestions are, what the relatives think about, and who would take care of the patient. After that, advice and treatments would be given, which are in line with modern medicine and what had been done. However, natural health would be recommended to be carried out simultaneously for better quality of life.

Natural health principles for cancer treatment of the center

- 1) To make better the final phase of the patient’s life
- 2) To lengthen the patient’s life beyond physicians’ prediction, which is the center’s achievement.

Discouraging speech should not be said to the patients but he should be given some hope from the treatment.

Objectives of treating cancer patients of the center

1) To slow down tumor growth by limiting or refraining from foods that promote tumor growth, for instance, meat, milk, and fatty and salty foods. What a patient is provided are brown rice, corn, soybean-based protein and vegetable juices.

2) To increase immunity by eating appropriate foods, drinking vegetable juices, practicing meditation and Chi Kong, undergoing acupuncture, herbal sauna and coffee detoxification to activate the liver to discharge toxins.

After obtaining the patient's record, the physician would recommend him to attend the natural health course and relatives are also encouraged to attend, so that they could help the patient do at home. Most of the activities are very similar to those of detoxified patients except foods. However, only 3% of cancer patients are recommended the course, not everyone.

Drugs

Most cancer patients have taken enough drugs, so treatments are not mainly drug-related. Nevertheless, drugs are kept at the clinic in case of emergency. Most are vitamins and herbal capsules. Some vitamins are in a solution form to be given by transfusion. Samples of vitamins and drugs at the clinic are as follows:

Modern drugs include Adalat for hypertension, Lopat for cholesterol, Isordil for heart disease, Eltroxin for poisonous thyroids, Aldactone for discharging urine, Bactrim, Diclocil and Lexinor are anti-biotics, Codipront for coughing, and Bisolvon for phlegm discharge.

Herbal medicine include garlic capsules, indigenous eggplant capsules for coughing, wheat seedlings, ginger capsules for disentry, and various herbal capsules for allergy, asthma, internal bruises, fever, sore throat and menstruation pains.

Vitamins, minerals and supplementary foods include vitamin C, B-complex, multivitamins, zinc, selenium, beta-carotene, evening primrose oil, vitamin E, omega-3, bio-carnitine capsules and liposorb.

Lab and X-ray

Blood examination is not required for patients seeking treatments at the center because most of them are given treatments at the hospital. They come here to

seek alternative health treatment simultaneously. Blood examination and X-ray will be carried out for those having annual medical check-ups. Blood checks focus on the following details.

- CBC (Blood cell conditions)
- PBS (Insulin)
- BUN, Cr (Kidney functions)
- Uric (Uric acid)
- LFT (Liver functions)
- Lipid (Cholesterol)
- Na, K (Sodium and potassium)

Tumor marker (Cancerous cells)

Blood checks are carried out by Bangkok Medical Lab Co., Ltd. For x-ray, ultrasound, CT Scan and MRI, patients could bring the results from their hospitals. If necessary, they will be sent to Uruphong X-Ray Center. If reimbursement could be done, patients are advised to have x-ray and blood checks at their hospitals. For emergency and critical cases, physicians and nurses will check the symptoms of patients before sending them to the nearest hospital.

Doctor's fees

Every patient or service user is required to pay doctors' fees as follows. For consultation and treatment recommendations, the fee is 400 baht, not exceeding 500 baht. Consultation with treatment like acupuncture, the fee is 600 baht. For regular patients, each visit is 300 baht and if treatment is required, they have to pay accordingly. For consultation to patients' relatives, the fee is free.

4.3.3 Dissemination of Knowledge on Natural Health

Nowadays, health issues have attracted more attention of the public. Many people have alternative health knowledge especially from the center. Dr. Banchob and Dr. Lalita have disseminated health knowledge to the public continuously. The focus is on natural diet, for instance, changing diet appropriate to health conditions, suitable

physical exercise, stress relief and meditation practice. Besides providing services on treatment and rehabilitation, the center also provides information on the topics through the following media.

Media activities and health activity group of the center

1) Natural health column

Columns written by Dr. Banchob Junhasvasdikul

- Matichon Weekly Magazine. The doctor has written articles for the magazine for over ten years.

- Praew Magazine. It is one of the top four fortnightly magazines for women and the doctor has written health columns for the magazine for over six years.

- POP Magazine is a monthly magazine for teenagers. The doctor has had a column on health questions for teenage readers for over three years.

Columns written by Dr. Lalita Dhirasiri

- Khuan Ruan Magazine is one of the oldest fortnightly magazines for women. Her column is about health foods and the menus are mainly health-based. The column has been in existence for over five years.

2) Health Publishing House

The two doctors and their physician friends have established a health publishing house called Raumtasana Company Limited. It publishes pocket books on health, which are available at book stores and leading health stores in Thailand. At present, they own about 30% of market shares on adult health books.

3) Television program

“Natural Health” is a live television program on UBC News with the two doctors taking a weekly turn as hosts. Sometimes, guest speakers specialized in natural health on different topics are invited. Each week, one topic is covered on natural health food, vitamin therapy, food supplement analysis, safe eating and health promoting equipment. The program presents scientific advantages of natural health

and effective experiences of practitioners. At the same time, local and international health issues of interest are also presented.

The target group are existing UBC viewers who are highly educated with good economic status and health conscious individuals wanting to know new trends of health.

Expected results

- It is expected that health awareness should be raised among the public.
- The public would know how to take care of their health with least expenditure
- The public would know how to use food supplements correctly and rationally.
- The public would know how to take information critically.

Evaluation

It is evaluated from the number of phone-ins and calls to product owners. It is revealed that viewers of the program are the middle and high class and the responses are very good. The rating is one of the two top talk shows of UBC.

4) Group members of the center

There are about 4,000 members who have undergone health courses, Chi Kong, yoga and hydroaerobic courses, and fitness membership. Of these, almost 2,000 of them are subscribers of the center's monthly newsletter.

5) Happy Centennial Club

Balavi Natural Health Center jointly establishes the club with Doctors Chek Thamasiri, Sanor Tanthasethi, Col. Sayuth Kerdpol, Col. Chamlong Srimuang and Assoc. Prof. Juraphan Mathayomchan. At present, there are about 3,000 members. Health lectures and health tours are organized once a month. During the lecture, health-related companies can participate.

6) Health tour

Health tour or detoxification tour is an in-depth activity, aimed at bringing old and new member for health practices by diet control, fasting, exercises and mental practice. The activities are a practical guideline for longevity.

The tour takes health conscious people for actual health practice. For effective organization, the trip requires physicians, nurses, sports scientists and yoga and Chi Kong instructors. The center could organize 4-6 trips a year with about 400-450 participants annually.

7) Site visits for the public

The center opens for the public to see its operations and services, which would be beneficial to alternative medical agencies in Thailand. It is also a publicity means of the center. Agencies from both state and private sectors have visited the center. During July to August, 2001, there were ten agencies visiting the center, for instance, Faculty of Nursing, Sirirat Hospital and Khon Kaen University, medical students from Ramathibodi Hospital, graduate students from Mahidol University, personnel from Ongkharak Hospital, Nakhon Nayok Province and Chumporn Hospital. Some of the objectives of the visits are as follows:

7.1) To know the concepts and motivation in providing holistic services of the center

7.2) To know activities of the center, which include operations, activities and expenditure, target groups, congruence of the activities with health problems of Thais, strengths and selling points of the activities, tactics in changing behaviors of service users, opportunities in applying the activities to the public at a cheaper price, operational problems, and acceptance of other public health personnel on the center's operations.

7.3) Roles of the physicians and teams toward service users, their family and the society

7.4) Data system and follow-up of service users

7.5) Evaluation of the center's operations

7.6) Concepts on expanding the center's operations (creating a network or collaboration).

8) Being speakers in academic seminars

To give lectures on natural health is another academic activity that the center is proud to carry out.

Activities of the center are beneficial to the public in terms of knowledge and academics on natural health. It is also a publicity of the center. From interviewing service users, it is found that they have known the center through different media, e.g., UBC television, Matichon Weekly Magazine, books that the two doctors wrote and words of mouth. These media have contributed to the center and its operations being known and accepted until now.

In conclusion, the center is established to provide patients another medical alternative because modern medicine could not completely solve health problems of the people. The center provides treatments that are in combination between modern and alternative medicines.

The treatments focus on natural health care with little drugs and a change of health care behavior. The center is another organization with readiness in terms of venue, easy access, equipment, knowledgeable personnel and various patterns of alternative medicine. Activities are well planned, suitable for time and service provision. Public relations is launched continuously through book writing, television program and lectures, publicizing the center as an alternative medical center. In addition, words of mouth help spread the reputation of the center, encouraging new service users to come for treatments at the center all the time.

CHAPTER 5

BALAVI NATURAL HEALTH CENTER: PERSPECTIVES OF SERVICE USERS AND MODERN PHYSICIANS

In studying the alternative medicine in Thai society, perspectives of service users and outsiders must be taken into consideration. Service users are an important factor for the existence of the center and perspectives of outsiders reflect comments on the operations of this alternative medical center. Comments of modern physicians are investigated in this study because they are public health personnel of the mainstream medicine in the country. For service users, 157 cases are involved in the investigation and they came for the services from January to December of 2001.

It is basic information of service users on gender, age and symptoms of sickness, which is obtained from their records when they attended the natural health courses. Then they are divided into two groups. The first group are those having undergone the courses at the center before the time when the data were collected. There are 124 cases and 17 of them were selected for in-depth interview by phone. The second groups are those having undergone the courses from October to December 2001. There are 33 cases and 20 of them were chosen for in-depth investigation. The number of the samples selected for in-depth investigation is few because there are some limitations. For telephone interview, some service users were not convenient in providing information, some were dead and others were unable to get contact with. As for the second group, the limitation stems from the researcher being unable to be in the research field all the time and service users had to carry out therapeutic activities all the time, making it difficult to interview them. As for modern medical doctors, seven cases were interviewed. Although all of them are not involved in alternative treatments, they are interested in them. The data thus are derived from those interested in and involved with alternative medicine (Some alternative treatments are used.) and those only interested in the service. All of them were willing to give their comments on the issues.

5.1 Characteristics of Service Users

During January to December 2001, there were 157 service users, dividing into 43 males and 114 females with different ages and maladies. They were further divided into 3 age groups to clearly indicate symptoms of each age group as follows:

Childhood from birth to 12 years old

Reproductive age from 13-49 years old. Women have menstruation and male sexual growth is complete.

Old age from 50 years and over. Women's age is used as the criterion since there are no criteria to indicate that men are beyond reproductive age. Women of this age have menopause and deterioration of their bodies (Sucha Jan-aim, 1984: 134:165).

All service users are then divided into 2 groups as follows:

The first groups are those having had the services from January to September 2001 before the actual data collection took place. The total number is 124 and 17 cases were chosen for in-depth interview by phone.

The second groups are those having had the services from October to December 2001 when the actual data collection took place. The total number is 33 and 20 cases were chosen for in-depth interview.

The interview covers information on sickness, service selection the center, results of the services and satisfaction of service users. The interview topics for both groups might vary somewhat due to limitations in providing information of each group. In general, however, the interview is in the same direction. Details of the interview are as follows:

5.1.1 Symptoms

Symptoms of 157 patients are various, e.g., diabetics, hypertension, heart disease, high cholesterol, obesity, stress, allergy and cancer. Some attended the courses for detoxification because they believed that in our daily lives, our bodies

receive toxins from foods that are not in line with nutritional principles and pollution, which cause illnesses as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Number of service users from January to December, 2001 by symptoms, sexes and ages

Sicknesses	Not over		13-49		50 years		Age not		Total		Total
	12 years		years		and over		known				
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
1. Cancer	-	-	8	23	23	37	1	2	32	62	94
2. Obesity	-	-	1	3	1	4	-	-	2	7	9
3. SLE	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	1
4. Parkinson's	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	1
5. Hypertension	-	-	1	-	-	4	-	-	1	4	5
6. High cholesterol	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	-	1	2	3
7. Diabetics	-	-	-	-	1	6	-	-	1	6	7
8. Kidney failure	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	2	2
9. Allergy	1	-	-	4	-	1	-	-	1	5	6
10. Stress, insomnia	-	-	1	2	-	5	-	-	1	7	8
11. Exhaustion	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	1
12. Heart disease	-	-	-	-	2	2	-	-	2	2	4
13. Liver disease	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	1	2	3
14. TIA	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
15. Breast tumor	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
16. Backache	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
17. Sciatica	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	1
18. Detoxification	-	-	-	4	-	4	-	-	1	8	9
Total	1	-	12	41	29	69	1	4	43	114	157

From Table 1, it is shown that female service users are three times as high as male users, accounting for 72.61 % for females and 27.38 % for male. The number of patients seeking cancer treatment is highest, accounting for 53.8 %. Others are not

many: Detoxification, headache, stress, insomnia, and obesity, diabetics, hypertension and allergy.

5.1.2 Present Domicile of Service Users

It is revealed from the survey that most of them were from Bangkok, 112 cases, followed by its outlying areas, 16 cases, and other provinces, 29 cases, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Domicile of service users attending natural health courses from January to December, 2001

Domicile	Number (cases)	Percentage
Bangkok Metropolitan	112	71.34
Its outlying areas	16	10.19
Other provinces	29	18.47
Total	157	100

For detailed information and a clear overview of comments of service users, an in-depth investigation was conducted with 2 groups of the service users.

5.2 Service Users Group 1

They were attending natural health courses at the center from January to September, 2001. The telephone interview was carried out with 17 samples. The interview was done with the users themselves and in some cases their relatives if the users were dead. There were 4 males and 13 females. The details are as follows:

5.2.1 Demographic Aspects

Of the 17 cases, one case was in the age range of under twelve, six cases in the age range of 13-49 years and ten cases in the age range of 50 and over. In terms of

domicile, 11 were in Bangkok, two were in its outlying areas and four were in other provinces (one from Surat Thani, two from Samut Songkhram and one from Chiang Rai).

5.2.2 Aspects of Sicknesses

Of all the service users interviewed, nine were suffering from cancer, two from allergy, two from hypertension, and one each from stress, exhaustion, breast tumor and Sciatica, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Maladies and number of service users in group 1

Maladies	Number of service users			Total
	Not over 12 years	13-49 years	50 years and over	
1. Cancer	-	3	6	9
2. Hypertension	-	-	2	2
3. Allergy	1	-	1	2
4. Stress	-	1	-	1
5. Exhaustion	-	-	1	1
6. Breast tumor	-	1	-	1
7. Sciatica	-	1	-	1
Total	1	6	10	17

5.2.3 Duration of Sickness and Treatment

Duration of sickness refers to the period of time suffering from the present maladies before seeking remedies at the center. It is found that one case was at the beginning of the malady and 16 cases had suffered from their ailments for over a month.

5.2.4 Reasons for Seeking Remedies at the Center

Reasons for seeking remedies at the center varied from case to case. It is revealed that seven cases were recommended by relatives and friends, eight cases believed and had faith in natural health therapy, eight cases found modern medicine ineffective, three cases were afraid of modern treatment, six cases wanted to try natural health remedy, and 13 cases wanted to combine modern and alternative medical treatment. The details are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Reasons for seeking remedies of service users group 1 (more than one reasons)

Reasons	Number of service users (case)
1. Recommendation from relatives and friends	7
2. Belief and faith in natural health treatment	8
3. Ineffectiveness of modern medicine	8
4. Fear of modern treatment	3
5. Wanting to try natural health therapy	6
6. Combining modern and alternative medical treatment	13

5.2.5 Patterns of Treatment

The service users were attending the five and ten day natural health courses. The activities of each included lectures on natural health, eating health foods and foods suitable for maladies, acupuncture, megavitamin and saline solution, hydrotherapy, solar bath, herbal sauna, yoga and Chi King exercises, fitness workout, meditation, Prana breathing practice, stress-relief massage, music therapy, watching cooking demonstration and using cooking utensils, and coffee detoxification. Before returning home, service users were given vitamins, food supplements and advice on how to practice in accordance with their maladies.

5.2.6 Remedy Results

It is found that eight cases had undergone modern medical treatment while six cases had not, and three cases had used modern and alternative medical treatment. After having undergone remedy sessions at the center, seven cases felt better while the remaining ten cases felt the same. Some cases had sought other alternative treatment or returned to modern medicine. This indicates that service users were both satisfied and unsatisfied with natural therapy of the center.

5.2.7 Continuous treatment

The interview on this topic focused on whether the service users had continued the remedies after the courses were over. It is found that 11 cases or 64.7% had returned to visit the doctors and had services for a period of time. However, six cases did not return or use the services. There are different reasons for continuing and discontinuing the treatment.

Reasons for continuing to seek remedies at the center

- 1) Treatments in the hospital were ineffective but users were not refused remedies at the center. Moreover, carrying out many activities was like being healed continuously.
- 2) After the treatment at the center, they felt better.
- 3) Treatments at the center were safe without side effects or taking too many drugs.
- 4) They felt emotionally better because natural health therapy helped maintain mental states of patients and their relatives. They were able to talk to other patients.
- 5) Natural health therapy was not as scary as modern medical remedies which were merciless to patients.
- 6) They needed natural health therapy because health was their choice.
- 7) They had combined modern and alternative medical treatment.
- 8) They had faith in the physicians.

Reasons for discontinuing to seek remedies at the center

- 1) Treatments at the center were ineffective
- 2) Service users had taken good care of themselves because advice from the center was similar from elsewhere.
- 3) Time was inconvenient.
- 4) They thought that the center could not improve patients because physicians were better at writing books and giving advice than providing effective treatment.
- 5) Treatment at the center was business-oriented.

5.2.8 Treatment Expenditure

All of the 17 cases had to pay for the center was 29,500 baht fee for a ten-day course with a free four-month health membership costing 10,400 baht or 18,500 baht fee for a five-day course with a free two-month health membership costing 5,200 baht. Other expenses included equipment if they had to do it at home, vitamins and food supplements. When asked if the fees were expensive, five cases thought they were not, whereas twelve of them viewed them as too expensive. In terms of cost-effectiveness, seven cases said that it was cost-effective because their physical and mental health was better and they gained health care knowledge for life. However, ten cases did not think so because they did not get any better, treatments were not in line with expenditure, and it was too business-oriented.

5.2.9 Self-care Methods before Seeking Treatment at the Center

Regarding self-care when they became sick before seeking remedies at the center, the respondents looked after themselves as follows:

- 1) Self remedy by changing their habitual way of life or taking drugs
- 2) Seeking treatment from a modern medical center, e.g., a hospital
- 3) Joint remedy between modern and alternative medicine, such as, hospital treatment and taking herbal medicine, eating health foods and having undergone treatment with Dr. Sathis Inthrakamhaeng

4) No previous treatment. When becoming sick, they sought treatment from the center.

5.2.10 Expectations Toward the Center

It is revealed that twelve cases expected a complete heal because it was alternative treatment after the mainstream medicine failed. Three cases expected that their ailments would be better and two cases expected natural health therapy to increase their immunity and better their health. Furthermore, they expected that the treatment would be highly safe with little or no side effects and personnel were knowledgeable, providing good advice. As for physicians, they were modern doctors, which was another reason to come here, expecting effective treatment. More importantly, alternative medicine was another choice after the failure of western medicine. In addition, they expected the place to be clean and safe because it was a private center. With regard to expenditure, they expected that services fees of natural health should not be too costly.

Table 5. Expectations from the center (more than one comments)

Expectations	Number (cases)
1. Convenient communication	17
2. Fast and convenient services	17
3. Efficient physicians	17
4. Safe treatment	17
5. Another treatment alternative	17
6. Expecting a complete cure	12
7. Lessening sickness	3
8. Strengthening immunity and better health	2
9. Good place and services	17
10. Suitable expenditure	7

5.2.11 Satisfaction of Service Users Group 1

Comments on satisfaction with the center of service users are as follows.

1) There were seven cases satisfactory with the treatment results. They were satisfied with medical check up, advice and knowledge on health care. They felt better and viewed that the services were cost-effective. Nonetheless, ten cases were not satisfied because they felt that natural health therapy was ineffective. This was because their ailments were chronic and incurable or they came here too late. Moreover, some cases thought that the advice was hard to put into practice.

2) There were nine cases satisfactory with physicians because they were friendly, knowledgeable about modern medicine. They were also different from those in hospital so patients could talk about their problems and they were given good advice on health care. However, eight cases were not satisfied with medical treatments because they were ineffective, against human nature, difficult to put into practice and business-oriented. Additionally, they thought that the physicians were better at giving advice and writing books.

3) All the samples were satisfied with the personnel, viewing that they were willing to give services, friendly and ready to give advice.

4) All of the service users were satisfied with the venue, viewing that the center was clean, safe, beautiful, shady and remedial equipment was modern and clean.

5) Seven cases were satisfied with treatment expenses, viewing that they were suitable and not too expensive. On the other hand, ten cases were not, citing that they were too costly and not cost-effective because they thought that alternative treatments should not be this expensive. Besides paying for the course fees, they had to pay for equipment for home practice and vitamins and food supplements.

Table 6. Comments of service users group 1 on satisfaction with the center (more than one answers)

Items on satisfaction	Number	
	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
1. Convenient and fast services	17	-
2. Personnel providing good advice and services	17	-
3. Clean and suitable place, easy for transportation	17	-
4. Being modern medical doctors or healers	17	-
5. Satisfaction with physicians after treatment	9	8
6. Treatment results	7	10
7. Treatment expenditure	7	10

From investigating service users group 1, it is found that most of them had suffered their ailments for over four weeks. Of the seventeen cases interviewed, eight cases had undergone treatments by modern physicians before coming to the center, while six cases had not. Reasons for seeking remedies at the center varied from person to person. For those using both modern and alternative medicines in combination, they would have undergone mainstream medical treatments first. Whether service users would continue treatments at the center depends on their satisfaction with treatment results, previous expectations and other reasons. How to take care of their health is also dependent on their health care behaviors as the following case studies show.

Case Study 1

A 56-year-old single woman was suffering from headache, stress and hypertension. She believed that her maladies were caused by present socio-economic conditions. She was susceptible to stress, did not have sufficient rest and had a bad eating habit. Before coming to the center, she had taken modern medication and felt

that she had taken it too much, accumulating more chemicals in her body. After reading Dr. Banchob's books on natural health and attending his lectures, she realized the root causes of her ailments and wanted detoxification. Since the doctor is a modern physician providing alternative medical services, she was confident that natural health therapy should be safe and suitable for herself. Thus, she had decided to seek alternative treatment, using modern medication as necessary. After having taken the course, she felt that it was very useful since she was provided good health care knowledge and advice. After implementing natural health practices, her health was better and her blood pressure was lowered. Ultimately, she understood that we have choices in our health and her treatment was a success and she would continue her treatment at the center.

From interviewing this case, it is found that decisions to seek remedies at the center are derived from belief in causes of ailments and in physical deterioration when taking too much modern medication. She also believed in treatment approaches carried out by modern medical doctors. After discovering that alternative medicine was effective in her case, she had found the medical system of her choice.

Case study 2

A 62-year-old married woman was suffering from cervical cancer since 1996. She had undergone chemotherapy at a private hospital. Two years later, it was found that the cancer had spread to her kidney. Due to misdiagnosis in the first place, the treatment was delayed for six months, making her symptoms more serious. Her relatives moved her to a new hospital and simultaneously provided her with Chinese herbal medicine. However, she was not getting any better. Her relatives found out about the center in the internet and read the books. They became interested and moved her to the center. She was put into the natural health course but her conditions deteriorated. She lost her weight quickly due to chemotherapy from the hospital. Loss of weight, exhaustion and restriction on foods had tired her body, but she insisted on staying because the physicians gave her encouragement and hope of getting better. However, when she did not get better, she felt that the physicians paid less attention and treatment expenditure was too expensive. Despite the reputation of the center having modern medical doctors provide alternative medical treatment, she felt that

they used their modern medicine to attract too many patients. At that time, there were a lot of cancer patients and they all had some hope in the treatments. When it was found that the treatment were not so effective, they had turned to the mainstream medicine.

From interviewing this case, after modern medicine had failed, she turned for alternative treatment at the center. Her decision was based on severity of her illness. Her interest stemmed from receiving information from various media. In addition, the treatments were carried out by modern medical personnel who gained reputation from implementing alternative remedies. This had raised the confidence in the patient. However, when the treatments were not successful and the hope for a complete cure was not met, she had turned to modern medical treatment. This case study shows various factors in selecting places for medical treatments.

Case study 3

A 49-year-old married woman discovered a cyst in one of her breast by mammogram examination. She was afraid of modern medical treatment because she felt it was merciless to patients. She was also scared of doctors' judgements of her illness. Consequently, she decided to seek remedies at the center instead of the hospital. She knew of the place via health books written by the owners and became interested in natural health therapy. She wanted to prevent herself from getting sick by taking care of her eating habit and her health. She felt that the body was capable of healing itself without external treatment. In addition, treatments at the center were conducted by knowledgeable modern physicians.

From the above case studies, two out of three had undergone modern medical treatment first before seeking alternative remedies after the former failed. The last case was interested and believed in natural health therapy, so she came directly to the center.

5.3 Services Users Group 2

This group of service users were undergoing natural health courses during October-December, 2001, which was the time of data collection. There were 37 cases and 20 were selected for the in-depth interview, due to all day activities which restricts time for data collection. The contents of the interview cover personal information, sicknesses, treatment patterns, expenditure, health care method during sickness, and expectation from and satisfaction with the center.

5.3.1 Demographic Information

The service users were in the age range of 13 to 80 years, 13 of them were in the age range of 13-49 years and 7 in the range of 50 years and over. There were no patients under the age of twelve. In terms of marital status, ten were single, eight married and two widowed. Regarding their domicile, 17 were from Bangkok, one from its outlying areas and two from Chonburi and Phitsanulok provinces. They traveled to the center by car, taxi and public bus.

With regard to education level, three cases had a primary school education, three a secondary school education, 11 an undergraduate education and three a graduate education. As for occupation, five cases were employees, two business persons, two merchants, two retirees, one state official, one student and five cases did not give the information.

With respect to monthly income, two cases were in the range of 15,000 – 20,000 baht, three in the range of 20,001 – 30,000 baht, two in the range of 30,001 – 40,000 baht, one in the range of 40,001 – 50,000 baht, one in the range of 50,001 – 60,000 baht, four in the range of 100,000 – 500,000 baht and seven cases did not provide the information (See Table 5.11).

Table 7. Demographic information of 20 service users in group 2

Demographic information	Number (cases)	Percentage
Sex		
Male	7	35
Female	3	65
Age		
Under 12 years	-	-
13-49 years	13	65
50 years and over	7	35
Marital Status		
Single	10	50
Married	8	40
Widowed	2	10
Domicile		
Bangkok	17	85
Bangkok's outlying area	1	5
Other provinces	2	10
Occupation		
State officials	1	5
Company employees	5	25
Business persons	2	10
Merchants	2	10
Retirees	2	10
Housewives	2	10
Students	1	5
No occupation	5	25
Educational level		
Primary school	3	15
Secondary school	3	15
Undergraduate level	11	55
Graduate level	3	15

Table 7. Demographic information of 20 service users in group 2 (Cont.)

Demographic information	Number (cases)	Percentage
Monthly income		
15,000 – 20,000 baht	2	10
20,001 – 30,000 baht	3	15
30,001 – 40,000 baht	2	10
40,001 – 50,000 baht	1	5
50,001 – 60,001 baht	1	5
100,000 – 500,000 baht	4	20
Income not specified	7	35

5.3.2 Information Access

Access to information about the center and its services has been many channels, which could be shown in Table 5.8.

Table 8. Access to information about the center and its services of services users groups 2 (more than 1 answer)

Information channel	Number
1. Others' recommendations	12
2. Written works of Dr. Banchob and Dr. Lalita	15
3. Television program	2
4. Internet	0

5.3.3 Sickesses

Of the twenty service users, 16 were suffering from cancer or 80% of all patients. The rest, one case each, were suffering from diabetics, kidney failure, headache, stress and obesity, as shown in the following table.

Table 9. Number of service users group 2 by sickness and age

Sicknesses and symptoms	Number of services users			Total
	Under 12 years	13-49 years	50 years and over	
1. Cancer	-	10	6	16
2. Diabetics	-	-	1	1
3. Chronic kidney failure	-	1	-	1
4. Headache and stress	-	1	-	1
5. Obesity	-	1	-	1
Total	-	13	7	20

5.3.4 Duration of Sickness and Number of Treatment

It is found that all of the samples had suffered for over one month and their ailments were chronic.

In terms of number of treatments at the center, it is revealed that seven of them were first timers, two had come for the services for 2-4 times (during 2-4 weeks), and eleven of them for over four times (over 4 weeks), as shown in the following table.

Table 10. Number of times that service users group 2 had treatments at the center

Number of treatment times	Number of service users
First time	7
2-4 times (within 2-4 weeks)	2
Over 4 times (within 4 weeks and over)	11
Total	20

5.3.5 Reasons for Seeking Remedies at the Center

Service users gave various reasons for seeking remedies at the center. Nine cases wanted it as an alternative treatment and nine of them believed in natural health

therapy. Twelve were frustrated with modern medicine or found it ineffective and thirteen were recommended by relatives and friends. Another thirteen respondents wanted it as an accompaniment of modern medicine. The details are shown in the following table.

Table 11. Reasons of service users group 2 for seeking remedies at the center (More than one answers allowed)

Reasons for seeking remedies	Number of service users
1. Recommended by relatives and friends	8
2. Trust in natural health treatment	9
3. Another treatment alternative	9
4. An accompaniment of modern medical treatment	13
5. Frustrated with modern medical treatment or found it ineffective	12

5.3.6. Treatment Patterns

This group of service users were attending and practicing activities in the natural health courses. The activities, as mentioned earlier, included attending natural health lectures, eating natural health foods, detoxification, acupuncture and megavitamin treatment. After the end of each course, attendants were provided vitamins and food supplements, advice on practices suitable for their ailments and principles of natural health.

5.3.7 Treatment Results

After having undergone the treatments at the center, 19 respondents found that their physical and mental health was getting better due to encouragement and good care for physicians and officers. Although their ailments were not yet completely cured, there was a positive change in their health. This made them satisfied with the center and they continued their treatments there. However, one

respondents found that there was still no change in her physical health since she had just started the treatment. Nonetheless, she had gained more health care knowledge which she could apply.

5.3.8 Treatment Continuation and Alternative Treatment Accompanying Modern Medicine

All of the respondents expressed their wish to continue their treatment at the center. They would come to every appointment until their ailments were better. If treatments were not effective, they would seek other remedies. However, they understood that natural health therapy took a long time and they had to be patient and carried out activities according to natural health principles. They accepted the outcomes and were satisfied with the treatment because it was beneficial to health in the long run.

It is further found that 19 cases would want alternative treatment together with the mainstream medicine due to the following reasons.

- Both should complement each other, which would enhance effectiveness of treatments.
- The two medicines should be used in combination because modern medicine deals directly with the disease, while natural therapy was the health rehabilitation.
- Modern medicine could deal with root causes faster, while natural health would be beneficial to health in the long run.
- Mainstream medicine focuses on chemical drugs to deal with the end results, but alternative medicine would help maintain good health.
- For maximum effectiveness, the two systems should be endorsed since each one has its own strengths and weaknesses. When used in combination, complete effectiveness might yield.

A respondent comments that, despite favoring the two system in combination, she would ultimately choose only the alternative system because she was not confident in the mainstream one.

5.3.9 Differences of Mainstream and Alternative Medical Treatments

The respondents made differences in various issues of the two medical systems as follows.

Physicians. In general, the respondents viewed that doctors at hospitals has very little time for patients and often did not explain what effects might follow after the treatment. Some physicians just gave orders without taking patients' feelings into consideration. In contrast, physicians at the center always talked and provided advice and encouragement to their patients.

Treatment. Treatments at hospitals focused way too much on drugs and remnants of chemicals remained in the body. Some treatments were frightening and painful with serious side effects, such as, surgery and chemotherapy. Hospitals were full of regulations and restrictions. Here, patients were allowed to eat all kinds of foods thought to be useful to the body and physicians were against detoxification. At the center, physicians advised patients to carry out modern and natural health treatments in combination. They also focused on knowledge and advice to promote better health in the long run. Advantages of various treatment methods were incorporated, ranging from food, sickness prevention to rehabilitation. The atmosphere was stress-free and treatment methods were tender.

Mental aspects. All respondents commented that hospital doctors paid little attention to patients' feelings due to temporal limitation. Patients needed more emotional support and explanation to reduce their illness-related anxiety. Additionally, going to hospital was stressful. At the center, physical and emotional health was simultaneously taken care of. Doctors had compassion and it was a place where patients could laugh and share their understanding and care.

5.3.10 Treatment Expenditure

Most patients coming to the center would undergo natural health courses. For the second group, almost all of them were undergoing natural health treatments. After the end of the course, patients would take vitamins and food supplements home. The expenditure for a five and ten-day courses was the same as group one and doctor's fee

was 400-500 baht a time. The interview revealed that two cases thought it was not expensive, considering having a life and good health back to the family, which was cost-effective. One respondent thought that it was not too expensive, affordable. However, 17 cases commented that it was too expensive for ordinary people because the duration of a course was short. For those with financial restriction, they had no opportunity to learn and heal. If the expenditure could be lowered, it would benefit more people. It was recommended that there be special promotion to help low income earners to regain their health. Of the 17 respondents, ten of them thought that it was cost-effective due to its practicality in the long run.

5.3.11 Health Care Methods During Sickness

Before seeking remedies at the center, the respondents had carried out treatment methods as follows:

- 1) Seeking treatment from a modern medical center, e.g., hospital
- 2) Carrying both modern and alternative medical treatments in combination, e.g, Chinese medicine or herbal medicine
- 3) No previous treatments were sought but coming directly to the center

Table 12. Health care methods of service users group 2 during sickness

Health care methods	Number of service users	Percentage
1. Using mainstream medical treatment	15	75
2. Combining modern and alternative treatment	4	20
3. No previous treatment	1	5
Total	20	100

5.3.12 Belief in Causes of Illness

All of the respondents believed that their ailments were caused by neglect to health care, carelessness in food consumption, lack of physical exercise, hard work, stress, insufficient rest, pollution, being in a bad environment, and rapid change of technology. These reduced immunity, increased severity of sickness and made us vulnerable to maladies.

5.3.13 Expectations from the Treatments at the Center

Expectations of the respondents varied. In answering this question, more than one answers were allowed. It is found that 18 respondents expected to have better health, ready for regular chemotherapy at the hospital. Two cases expected to detoxify from chemotherapy and 11 cases expected a complete cure. Moreover, nine cases trusted that natural treatment was effective and highly safe and 17 cases wanted to try natural health therapy. Other comments included combination of mainstream and alternative treatments since it should be more effective than using either of them. Natural health treatment detoxified chemicals from modern medicine. It also rehabilitated health and strengthened immunity to fight against their existing ailments as most respondents were suffering from cancer. More importantly, the two medical systems should be used in combination because each one had its strengths and weaknesses. The details are shown in the following table.

Table 13. Expectations from treatments at the center of service users group 2

Expectations	Number
1. Easy access to the center	17
2. Fast and convenient services	18
3. Competent physicians	15
4. Natural health therapy was highly safe	20
5. Another alternative for healing sickness	20
6. Expecting a complete heal	2

Table 13. Expectations from treatments at the center of service users group 2 (Cont.)

Expectations	Number
7. Expecting to get better	18
8. Expecting strong immunity and better health	20
9. Good place and services	17
10. Suitable expenditure	17

5.3.14 Satisfaction of Service Users Group 2 with the Center

It is found that 18 cases were satisfied with the effectiveness of the treatments, which included advice and treatment from physicians, natural health methods, better physical and mental health of patients, convincing them that they should continue this medical trend. All of them were satisfied with doctor-patient relationship because doctors talked and gave advice to them and were friendly enough to talk about their ailments, which was different from what happened at the hospital. Nineteen cases were satisfied with fast and convenient services. Waiting time was short since there were not many patients and the place opened all day. The same number of respondents were satisfied with personnel since they were willing to give good services and advice. Regarding the place, 17 respondents were satisfied, since it was clean, safe, relaxing, shady and equipped with modern instrument. However, three respondents commented that cleanliness of the place, towels and bedsheets should be improved because service users were sick, therefore, care for cleanliness should be strictly taken. Moreover, 17 respondents noted that coming to the center was convenient, but three of them residing far away encountered some inconveniences due to traffic congestion, making them unable to attend morning sessions. Some suggested that accommodation should be provided for those having difficulty traveling to the center. Or the center should be expanded to other provinces to provide local residents an opportunity to participate in health activities. In terms of expenditure, three respondents thought that it was not so expensive, considering getting their lives, health and families back. However, 17 of them viewed it as too expensive because it was a long-term treatment.

Table 14. Comments of service users group 2 on satisfaction with treatments at the center

Issues of satisfaction	Number
1. Fast and convenient services	19
2. Personnel providing good services and advice	19
3. Suitable and clean place	17
4. Easy access	17
5. Doctor-patient relationship	20
6. Effectiveness of treatment	18
7. Treatment expenditure	3

To realize healing behaviors of the service users group 2 who had undergone treatments at the center during October to December, 2001, some case studies are investigated as follows.

Case study 1

A 48-year-old married and self-employed man was from Bangkok with undergraduate education. During his teenage years, he usually ate out and did not consider whether the foods were useful to his health. He did not exercise, worked hard and rested very little. He sometimes drank and smoked.

Ten years ago, he was diagnosed with Hepatitis B, but was not informed that there was a possibility of liver cancer. He felt that Thai doctors hardly gave knowledge to patients. As a consequence, his eating habit was not changed. He still ate meat, fried and fatty foods without taking any medication.

In 1999, he lost two kilograms and wondered why he lost his weight despite eating the same amount of food. A medical checkup revealed that liver enzymes (LFT) were unusually high and an ultrasound was conducted. It was revealed that there was a tumor on his left liver and the examination revealed that it was cancerous. He was devastated and was told that he could probably live for another year. He underwent a chemotherapy and had a surgery on his left liver to remove the tumor. After the surgery, the enzymes were still very high. A CT scan revealed that the cancer had spread to the right liver. The doctors decided to inject the chemicals

directly to the tumor. Nevertheless, the treatment was ineffective and he was painful and very exhausted.

He never knew about natural health therapy until he was given a book on cancer treatment with natural health. Later, he sought treatment from Dr. Sathis and was given megavitamins and coffee detoxification. He didn't like it because the doctor was very difficult to get to since he had many patients and no time to listen to his problems. In addition, he did not like to go for checkups at the hospital (the doctor worked at a private hospital), thinking that going to the hospital was a suffering. He did not have faith in Thai doctors at all because doctors were angels and falseless, ignoring what patients felt. He thought that Thai medical system was a failure.

He was recommended to the center and the doctors here recommended the combination of modern and alternative medicines. At first, he was hesitant, fearing that treatment would be the same. After attending a course, he knew that it was cost-effective. He had obtained a lot of knowledge and advice. Moreover, the doctors here had time and were compassionate. He had been here for two years and satisfied with the treatments. The center was not a hospital and it was the only place where cancer patients could laugh and share mutual understanding and compassion. The doctors healed not only the body but also the mind. Up until now, he was on megavitamins. It was boring sometimes but he did not want to stop for fear of deterioration as he stopped going to the hospital. Despite treatments at the center, his health was deteriorating because he knew that the disease was still there. He came here because he felt better than going to the hospital. Moreover, he had expected a complete cure because without hope, he would not have sought remedies. He thought that there was hope in every patient.

Case study 2

A 44-year-old single female banker was from Bangkok. She had a bachelor degree, worked hard and had a bad eating habit, consuming fast foods. She was fed up with her work and decided to study abroad for two years. She was still healthy after returning home until May, 2001, when she found a lump on her left breast. After a careful checkup at a hospital, a one-centimeter lump was found to be a cancerous tumor. Doctors advised her to have a surgery. After consulting with physicians from

another place, she decided to have an operation. Her feeling then was fear and sadness, not thinking that she would have the disease. But she tried to be strong, fearful that the cancer would spread. The operation was painful and she suffered from anesthetic. She thought everything was over after the surgery. It turned out that she had to undergo chemotherapy. Later, her friends did not agree with modern medical treatment because of numerous side effects and recommended natural health therapy. She then called Dr. Banchob and was advised to attend a natural health course to adjust her eating habit and lifestyle. She had never had a decent lifestyle and always been stressful, which might be a cause of her illness. She was not recommended to have only natural health treatment, so she had undergone a chemotherapy simultaneously. It was sheer suffering because she threw up and her hair fell off. She told the hospital about natural health treatment and the doctors was against the idea, saying that it was a waste of money. But they told her to continue if it made her happy. After having attended the course for some time and carried out the advise, she felt alright during chemotherapy and thought she was on the right track. In the depth of her mind, she was still anxious that the cancer would spread to other part, but she had done her best any way. If something happened, she would regard it her karma. Her eating habit nowadays had completely changed, strictly on vegetarian diet. She was also calmer and looked at things in a more positive way. She also recommended her family to do so.

She liked natural health treatment due to fewer side effects. Nevertheless, it could sometimes be boring because of activities all day long. There was not time for herself. At times, she would take other foods if it were too boring. After the sickness was cured, she would carry on some part of natural health practices for fear of the recurrence of the disease.

Treatment expenditure was very expensive. It was not only the course fee but she had to pay for vitamins, foods and activities and treatments were ongoing. Sometimes it was like in a dilemma. Many were complaining but did not know what to do since there was no ending in sight. Fear made her go on and she still believed that natural health therapy could stop cancer or even cure it. We understood the center because it had to support itself. However, service users were in a difficult situation

because of high expenditure. She thought if the treatments were not effective, she would continue seeking other remedies.

Case study 3

A 49-year-old married businessman was from Bangkok. He was not selective about foods, eating sweet, fatty Chinese food since he had to entertain his clients. He worked hard, was always stressful and had no time for exercise. In 1997, he started to get sick with high fever, joint and muscle pains, nausea and upset stomach. At first he thought it was just a common cold. He took medication and injection but it was not getting better. He was admitted to the hospital and found that he was suffering from Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma. But his wife told him that it was just infectious lymph. He had to undergo chemotherapy every three weeks. During the therapy, his body gave in. He was unable to walk, suffering from exhaustion, numbness on limbs, nausea, inability to eat and hair loss. His hair remained only 20% and it was pathetic. He cried due to loss of self-image. He was afraid of shampooing and later all his hair fell off. He was so exhausted that he could not work. He had to stay in bed and his body was so painful that he would be dying. Then his wife gave him a book written by Dr. Banchob and he found the center's address and brought himself for treatment. (He knew then that he had cancer because his foreign colleagues told him. It was devastating counting down his days. He was crying a lot.) During the initial stage of the treatment, it was a pure suffering being dipped in and out of hot and cold water and physical exercise. It was something he was not accustomed to. He didn't believe that it would be effective and his relative who was a modern medical doctor told him that he was out of his mind. However, he was determined to apply both types of the medical systems. He was getting serious, taking a leave from work to carry out natural health therapy. He started from light exercise and meditation, praying that he would be able to walk again. (He was then unable to walk, suffering from exhaustion and he lost 19 kilograms.) Later on, he could really walk and run. Sometimes he was praying by himself, doing what he had never done before and eating foods according to the center's. Up to now (2001), he had been regularly and patiently practicing his new lifestyle. He had 17 times of chemotherapy and took chemical drugs for one year, totaling two years of hospitalization. Follow-up examinations continued. Blood test

results were satisfactory except some components. As for treatment at the center, he was taking vitamin C, Beta-carotene, vitamin E and food supplements. His health was getting much better now and he could work more.

He thought treatments at the center promoted physical and mental health. Being among people suffering from the same fate, talking and giving moral support to one another were something that did not exist in the hospital. He thought he would continue the treatment here until he was told to stop. In his opinion, the treatment expenditure was not so expensive, given that he had his life and health back. He was almost normal now and did not want to become sick again, but again, it was up to his destiny. He tried not to become stressful and improved his quality of life. He also recommended others to seek treatments at the center.

From the above case studies and concept on health care and medical system in society of Author Klienman, it could be seen that when sickness occurs, a factor defining health care methods of an individual is belief in causes of sickness which specify behavior and concept on selecting treatment methods. Pluralism of medical systems in society reflects behavior and patterns of treatments of the sick.

5.3.15 Opinions on Treatments at the Center

Opinions of service users on the premise

From interviewing the two groups of service users, their opinions could be summarized into 4 topics, namely, venue, services, personnel and patterns of treatment.

Venue

As for opinions on the service venue, it is found that most were satisfied with it, citing that it was clean and orderly in both the clinic and the center. Only some parts looked packed and not so orderly, for instance, the areas of the counter in the clinic and document shelves, probably due to a large number of documents. However, in general, it was tidy, clean and spacious. The examination rooms were well organized. The center was also located in a beautiful and shady environment. In the

traditional Thai house, all the rooms were well laid out and organized. Nonetheless, some commented on cleanliness of towels and bedsheets for fear of germs.

Regarding the location of the center, most agreed that it was conveniently situated with easy access except some days of heavy traffic. Some suggested that accommodation be provided to people from the provinces or, if possible, the center should expand its branches to other provinces to provide services to local residents.

Services

Most of the respondents felt satisfied with the services. They were fast and personnel were welcoming and willing to help and give advice. Doctor-patient relationship was good because the doctors had times to talk to. Having two doctors at the center guarantee patients that they could always see the doctors. Drug prescription was quick, reducing waiting time for each appointment. While attending a natural health course, participants were well taken care of and officials were friendly and polite.

Personnel

Most service users thought that having modern medical doctors was a decisive factor to seek treatment at the center. The physicians provided them both advice on health and encouragement, which rarely existed in hospitals. Due to its reputation on natural health, service users wanted to try the treatments here. After the treatments, some retained faith on the doctors while others viewed them as business-oriented.

For other personnel, most respondents were satisfied with them because they were knowledgeable and provided useful advice. During the therapy activities, they were willing to carry out, friendly and polite to service users.

Patterns of treatments

Most respondents viewed that the treatments were highly safe since modern drugs were least involved. The focus was on vitamins and food supplements, which should be more beneficial than harmful to the body as there were no chemical toxins left in the body. However, taking a mouthful of vitamins each day was sometimes

boring. For other natural health treatments like eating vegetable and fruit-based foods and other activities, they thought that they were beneficial to their health, enhancing strong immunity and alleviating their physical and mental well-being. Nevertheless, some commented that the activities were too many and they had to rush to complete them within a day.

In terms of expenditure, most of the service users agreed that it was too expensive because it was a long term treatment. Prices should be reduced as a charity work for the public sometimes. The reason for paying a steep price for the treatment was because they hoped for a complete cure.

5.3.16 Opinions on Alternative Medical Treatment

The respondents viewed that natural health therapy was another alternative to cure sickness. When modern medicine was no longer effective, other alternative methods were selected. Natural health therapy was safe and quite reliable and knowledge-oriented. It was not conducted by a shaman. Some service users found it effective and beneficial as their physical and mental health became better. However, others found it ineffective because they might be suffering from chronic and serious illnesses. In general, they viewed that the two medical systems should be taken simultaneously. Modern medical system could solve present health problems promptly, whereas alternative medical system strengthened long-term immunity, reducing chemicals from modern drugs from the body and keeping everyone in good health. Each system has its strengths and weakness, but when they were combined, it could result in a better cure.

5.4 Perspectives of Modern Medical Doctors on Alternative Medical Treatment

Medical pluralism exists in every society, with one system as the mainstream. For Thailand, the mainstream system is the western medical one and the rest is categorized under the alternative medicine. In a society with medical pluralism, western-oriented physicians define directions of medical treatment. In this investigation, perspectives of seven medical doctors were presented. Two of them

were interested in alternative medicine and incorporated acupuncture in their treatment. The data included their opinions on modern medical treatment, trends of present alternative medicine, using alternative medicine to lower the burden of modern medical treatment, effectiveness of alternative medicine, combination of the two systems and their results, recommending patients to use alternative treatment, and the future of alternative medicine in Thailand. The details are as follows:

1) Modern medical treatment

From interviewing the seven physicians on treatment sufficiency of modern medicine, it is found that one of them thought it was sufficient while the rest did not think that the treatment was complete in itself. There are several maladies that modern medicine could not cure. The present medicine system still needs to develop more knowledge and treatment approaches. Moreover, it focuses on physical treatment, neglecting mental aspects of patients. Simply put, it is not holistic.

2) Trends of present alternative medicine

Regarding opinions on present alternative medicine, five respondents commented that it stemmed from modern medicine being unable to cure all sicknesses and other medical problems. For instance, there was a healing gap due to a distant doctor-patient relationship. Furthermore, modern medicine has still been unable to provide all answers to patients, driving some groups of patients, especially those suffering from chronic illnesses, to seek other forms of treatment. This paves a way for a group of people to exploit medical society and set up alternative medical businesses. However, one respondents viewed that alternative medicine was created by ignorance because Thai people were not knowledgeable and rational enough to reject the system. One respondent cautioned that people should not believe alternative medicine completely since alternative treatments were not suitable for every patient.

3) Implementation of alternative medicine

One respondent expressed his opinions on the topic that modern physicians should be open-minded and implement alternative approach because neither modern nor alternative medicine could cure all kinds of diseases. Five respondents viewed that safe alternative treatments, e.g., acupuncture, massage, or the forms that induce peace of minds in patients, e.g., meditation and yoga, should be incorporated in the mainstream treatments. Alternative medicine might be beneficial

to mental well-being of patients since it is holistic in nature. If patients were forbidden, they would not opt for modern medicine, making it difficult to follow up. However, one respondent was not certain about effectiveness of alternative medicine.

4) Effectiveness of alternative medicine

In terms of effectiveness, one respondent commented that alternative medicine was effective but could not be proved at the moment. When it was applied, patients got better. Another respondent thought that in alternative medicine, doctors could take care of patients better since they had more time to give advice, explanation and encouragement. Patients felt better may be due to placebo effects. Two respondents said that some forms were effective like acupuncture, but others should not be good to patients, such as, taking herbs without being extracted, body and mind food, megavitamins and detoxification. Three respondents thought that alternative medicine was not reliable in many ways. Some forms were not suitable to every patients. They were not sure how effective it was because they didn't know how alternative doctors selected their patients and how they evaluated their treatment. Some illnesses could be cured without doing anything. Therefore, an effective treatment should be able to summarize statistically.

5) Combination of modern and alternative medicines

Three respondents viewed that combining the two systems should not be harmful to patients' health if using safe forms of alternative treatment. Diagnosis of each system might be different but a patient was still suffering from the same ailment. Whatever forms of treatment were used, the ultimate aim was the same. However, some modern medical treatments were not fully effective in, for example, cancer which had many complications and required huge expenses. If a cancer patient used other alternative methods that were not detrimental to his health, such as, acupuncture, massage and relaxation, they should not be contrary to modern medical approaches.

One respondent thought that whether different approaches would be in contradiction depended on what forms were used. We commented that meditation, yoga and Chi Kong exercise should complement each other. However, three respondents did not agree on the idea of using the two systems together because they might overlap and the results may be altered, which might not be good to the

original treatment and to patients themselves, for instance, drug redundancy or overdose or alternative treatment against modern medicine.

6) Recommendation patients to alternative medical treatment

All of the respondents agreed that if modern medicine were ineffective and came to the dead end, they would recommend patients to try safe alternative approaches to boost their morale. But if those approaches were harmful or not easily available and expensive, they would not recommend their patients.

7) Future of alternative medicine

Four respondents viewed that alternative medicine should be more acceptable because it was what people needed. Modern medicine could not heal all diseases, therefore, people would seek more alternative methods. When they were effective, words of mouth would spread. It was told from direct experiences, creating trust in the effective results and more people would turn to alternative medicine.

One respondent commented that whether alternative medicine would be acceptable in the future by people depended on public relations. From the point of modern medicine, it was not likely that alternative medicine would be incorporated because it was not effective in medical terms. The other two respondents noted that it was very difficult that alternative medicine would be accepted by mainstream medicine.

In addition to the above opinions, the physicians provided additional comments as follows:

1) It was difficult to incorporate alternative medicine with the mainstream one in an environment where modern medicine was influential in the society. In the initial stage, it might be hard to get acceptance from physicians and patients. Such incorporation should be gradual. Reactions and opinions of others should be evaluated. Extreme care should be exercised not to let any error happen when alternative approaches were implemented.

2) Some forms of alternative treatment could not be used with all patients to cure all ailments. Consequently, the public should not readily believe in the trend. They should think carefully and critically before implementing the forms.

3) Alternative medicine should develop itself by conducting research and scientific comparative studies with supporting data. Its effectiveness should be vigorously investigated before being publicized and used to cure patients. This was to prevent mistakes and harm to patients. If it was proved to be safe, it would be regarded as complementing the mainstream medicine.

4) Alternative medicine should set up its treatment rules and regulations, indicating which approach was correct. Data revealed should not be one-sided and statistic records about strengths and weaknesses of each treatment form should be carried out. Alternative doctors should hold a meeting to make an agreement among themselves which forms were reliable. They should continuously develop their knowledge for maximum benefits of patients and their treatments should not be too business-oriented.

5) Alternative medicine should be legally recognized like modern medicine.

Conclusion

From investigating perspectives of service users on treatments at the center and of modern physicians on alternative medicine, it could be summarized as follows:

Most service users were female in the age range of 13 to over 50 years and residing in Bangkok, where travelling to the center was convenient. Most of them were suffering from cancer at the chronic and later stages and had undergone mainstream medical treatment. Information about the center was from relatives and friends, books written by the doctors & owners, television programs and the internet. This indicated that public relations of the center was efficient, attracting a large number of patients to seek remedies here. The main reasons for coming here were failure of modern medical treatment, recommendations from others, wanting to try natural health therapy and a belief that combining the two medical systems should be better than undergoing either one of them. Before attending courses at the center, most of them hoped that natural health therapy would make their health better. Few of them hoped to have a complete cure since they knew that the disease was incurable. All of them attended natural health courses, received vitamins, food supplements and advice on how to practice according to natural health principles.

In this investigation, service users were classified into 2 groups based on different periods of seeking treatments. As a consequence, their opinions on treatment outcomes were different. In the first group who had already undergone the treatment, most viewed that the outcomes remained the same with nothing better. Some returned to modern medical treatments only while others were seeking other forms of treatment. The majority did not continue at the center since nothing improved and they had already well taken care of themselves as well as temporal limitation. As for the second group who were undergoing the treatment, they thought that the treatments made them feel healthier and stronger. They intended to continue at the center but if it was not effective, they would seek other forms or return to mainstream treatments.

Opinions on treatment outcomes of the two groups were different, which could be analyzed that duration of services was different. As for the first group, their practices might not regular due to inconvenience about time. On the contrary, activities were continuous for the second group with everything arranged for them. Being able to talk to the doctors and other patients as well as giving moral support to one another might improve their conditions, affecting their satisfaction with the treatment. For the first group, most were suffering from chronic and incurable diseases at later stages, so their health was deteriorating according to stages of their ailments. Time of interview might affect their opinions. They were not on the course of treatment when interviewed, so they were free to express their opinions.

With respect to satisfaction with the center of the two groups, it is found that the center provided good and convenient services with clean and easily accessed place. Its personnel were efficient, knowledgeable and willing to give advice. The doctors were modern medical professionals who gave trust to service users. They also had time to provide patients counseling and advice on how to take care of themselves. However, most of them viewed that the expenditure was rather high and should be reduced as it was a long-term treatment. They found that natural health therapy was good and safe.

As for perspectives of modern medical doctors on alternative treatment, it is revealed that it was still insufficient to cure illnesses but it was not entirely unreliable. Alternative medicine could be implemented and the safer forms of treatment included acupuncture, massage, mental exercises and relaxation. The medicine was effective in

mental terms, making patients feel happier. But before implementing alternative medicine, it should be considered whether the forms would be beneficial to patients. Care should be seriously taken since some forms of alternative treatment were harmful. Sometimes it was just patients' beliefs without any treatment benefits. Alternative medicine should conduct more research and record data statistically in order to create more trust among modern medical professionals and patients in general.

CHAPTER 6

FACTORS AFFECTING SERVICES AT BALAVI NATURAL HEALTH CENTER

Present situations of alternative medicine are that it is an interesting and more acceptable science. People are getting more aware of health care methods that are not modern medical treatments. Patterns of alternative health care have been presented via different media. Naturally, awareness on alternative medicine affects health service systems of people in the society. Alternative medical centers more or less exist hand in hand with institutionalized medical centers, although the number is not as many. This chapter investigates factors affecting services at Balavi center, which has been in operation for over twenty years. The data are from the center itself, the physicians, the clinic, forms of treatment and service users or patients. The investigation would reveal what factors influencing the decision-making of patients to seek treatments at the center.

6.1 Disappointment from the Modern Medical System

Modern medicine is the mainstream medical system in almost every country in the world, including Thailand. Though it has played a crucial role in the public health system, it is not a panacea for every ailment. There are many sicknesses that modern medicine cannot deal with. Unholistic treatment separating body, mind and society of the mainstream medicine frustrates and discourages patients. From interviewing the patients at the center, it is found that all of them had undergone modern medical treatments, but they were not effective due maybe to chronic and incurable diseases, formal and distant doctor-patient relationship, pains and suffering from treatments, stress from hospital and service systems. These are some of the reasons why these patients sought alternative medical treatments. Despite weaknesses

of the mainstream medicine, they did not completely abandon it. The treatments still remained and alternative medicine was used to complement them. Patterns of treatments of the center were different from the mainstream ones, be they a good doctor-patient relationship, alternative-curing methods, caring personnel, convenience of services, readiness of the place and amiable relationship among patients. The center improved weaknesses of modern medicine and complemented what mainstream medicine lacked for its patients. These are the strengths of the center, which attract service users to seek remedies here all these years. It is also open more opportunities to have a choice in taking care of their health.

6.2 Physicians at the Balavi Center

The physicians, Dr. Banchob and Dr. Natha or Lalita Junhasavasdikul, have played a significant role in creating alternative medical treatments for people to have faith and trust in them. They are modern medical professionals who have incorporated mainstream and alternative treatments by adapting and adjusting them to suit local people. Being modern medical doctors is crucial for service users to trust, which is a plus that other alternative medical centers do not have. Their reputation in natural health is also an advantage because prior to this, there were very few alternative centers in the country. They were the pioneers in implementing alternative medicine from other societies to cure ailments. Furthermore, they work closely with patients, providing them counseling and advice and reducing the gap of doctor-patient relationship, resulting in satisfaction of service users. This is a prominent advantageous point for people disappointed from the modern medical system to seek and choose a different system of treatments.

6.3 Trends of Alternative Medicine in Present-day Thai Society

The influence of alternative medical trends from other countries spreading through the media has raised awareness on health care among Thai people. It is found that alternative medical science from foreign societies comes in the forms of knowledge and products. People are disappointed in modern medicine and that

conscious of their health care are interested in implementing such a trend. The center is very famous in this area and a pioneer in alternative medicine before it has been popularized. The reputation and competency of the doctors combined with a good vision in publicizing alternative medical information to the public have attracted people to come for services at the center all the time.

From the interviews, it is revealed that the decision to seek remedies at this alternative medical center was that certain aspects of modern medicine have come to the dead end. Moreover, natural health alternative medicine is safe and the healers are knowledgeable. One of the main reasons for choosing this alternative treatment is that they want it to complement the mainstream methods. One asset of the center is that it is a pioneer in alternative medicine in Thailand, which is another decisive factor for patients to seek treatments here.

6.4 Patterns of Alternative Medical Treatments Used at the Center

Since physicians at the center are mainstream medical professionals interested in alternative medical science, treatment patterns or forms are the combination of western and alternative medicines. Medical check-ups and diagnosis are carried out according to modern medical principles while treatments are based on alternative medicine imported from other countries, adapted and improved to suit the local contexts. These methods are safe and practical since they have been proved and practiced by ancient peoples since time immemorial. Although modern medical professionals have criticized some forms, the differences in treatment interest the mass and they also want to try. In addition, treatments at the center are dissimilar to what modern medical system practices. Relatives and family members are encouraged to participate in the healing process, starting from the examination rooms so that they could hear explanations simultaneously. They could ask question as many as they can in a friendly atmosphere. Furthermore, they could learn and practice in simultaneity with the patients so that they could carry out the healing activities at home after the course ends. This method familiarizes patients and relatives with the alternative treatment and makes them trust in what they are doing. It also reduces the gap of doctor-patient relationship, which satisfies service users and their relatives. They

would then transfer the information to others, increasing the number of people interested in this alternative science.

6.5 Location, Transportation and Physical Characteristics

Another factor affecting the decision of patients to seek remedies at the center is that the medical center is conveniently located with easy access. In terms of its physical characteristics, it is suitable for carrying out alternative treatment activities. It has a legally licensed clinic with no patient beds. The operations of the Balavi Center are under the supervision of modern medical doctors and its personnel are knowledgeable and willing to give advice. Treatments by means of natural health therapy are based on academic principles. Causes and consequences of each healing activity could be connected to the principles of health sciences. Furthermore, medical and rehabilitation equipment is up-to-date, with a clean and beautiful place. Treatment atmosphere is also amiable, which is another psychological component to make patients feel at home and stress-free.

6.6 Public Relations

The founders of the center have a wide vision to introduce the alternative medical center to the public. Consequently, good public relations is crucial to publicize the place and convince people to have services here. Public relations plans have been launched to penetrate the target group: the affluent middle class. Mass media, e.g., newspapers, journals, books, television and the internet have been used. Different media have been utilized because each one has its own strengths and weaknesses. Using only one type may not get through the target group and convince them to change their attitude. As the modern medical system is the mainstream in our society, the center must employ every means to gain acceptance and trust of the public in order for its existence. Additionally, the center presents a unique and acceptable treatment approach to its customers, by presenting its strengths to the public, which include medical professionals, treatment patterns, venue, services and

on-going public relations campaigns. These factors contribute to the decisions of patients to seek treatment at the center.

Regarding service fee, although most of the service users agreed that the fees were relatively expensive, the target group of the center is the affluent middle class. Prices are in accordance with production or investment costs. The center is a private medical center, which has to invest and administer its finance by itself. Price specification is another strategy of marketing. Lower service fees than those of the competitors do not necessarily mean that more service users would be convinced since they have different reasons to pay for the services. Therefore, before coming to the center, expenditure is another factor for considering whether paying for their health is cost-effective.

6.7 Operational Problems of the Center

From the investigation, operational problem of the center could be realized as follows.

1) Influence of the modern medical system

Since Thailand regards the modern medicine as the mainstream medical system of the country despite its inability to solve all health problems, it is undeniable that the system is the best at the moment for healing sicknesses of people in the world due to scientific and technological advancement. Moreover, most people are accustomed to the defensive medical pattern, relying on medical personnel and hospital. Therefore, changing health care behavior to the proactive medical pattern is hard to do. When they become sick, what they think of is hospital and public health officials. Though some of them have sought alternative medical treatments or used them together with modern ones, when they are not effective, they ultimately turn to the modern medical system. Since Thailand has the modern medical system as the mainstream, medical professionals define the roles of national public health and operations of other alternative medical systems. The operations of the center are monitored constantly because its physicians have a different treatment concept by implementing alternative medicine to heal the sick, which is completely different from modern medical principles. The modern medical system regards itself as more

complete than others, imposing the standard of treatment over that of other alternative medicines. It regards its treatments as correct, safe and reliable with research and legal support. However, alternative medicine lacks scientific data to support its effectiveness and safety of some practices, which has become a weakness of alternative medicine. Therefore, certain forms of treatment at the center are against or in contradiction to the concepts of modern medicine.

2) Perspectives of service users

Despite the reputation of alternative medicine, present socio-economic conditions of the middle class, who are the target group of the center have made it difficult to carry out natural health practice and lifestyle as it is time-consuming and they have to earn a living. Being accustomed to a defensive medical pattern, relying too much on medical professionals and hospitals, self care has become something inconvenient to put into practice. Furthermore, the progress of modern medical technology has made diagnosis highly accurate and quick in dealing with health problems. Most of the service users at the center have still been undergoing mainstream medical treatments. Some of them wanted to try a new experience and when the results were slow or ineffective due to final stages of their chronic ailments, they had turned to depend on the modern medicine. Another problem of access to the center is incomes of service users. Due to a high rate of service fees, many viewed that it was too business-oriented. The treatment was also not cost-effective because most of them were in the final stages of ailments, which required high expenditure for healing. Some of them did not return and were not satisfied with the services at the center.

The above-mentioned factors affect the seeking for services of patients at the center, which include disappointment in the mainstream medical system, being medical professionals at the center, its location, access, public relations, influence of modern medicine, perspectives of service users, and alternative medical trend in the country.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS

This descriptive investigation on the alternative medicine in Thai society: a case of Balavi Natural Health Center aims at studying the concepts and service patterns of alternative medicine, service users and types of their illnesses, seeking of treatment methods, selection of alternative medical treatments, opinions of modern physicians on alternative medicine, and factors affecting services. It is focused solely on Balavi Natural Health Center in Bangkok. The population is categorized into 3 groups, namely, the center and its physicians, service users, and modern physicians and their perspectives on alternative medicine. An in-depth interview was conducted with 17 samples having the services from January to September, 2001 and 20 samples from October to December of the same year. For the first group, it is a retrospective investigation by searching their records to obtain preliminary information and a telephone interview is carried out. With respect to perspectives of modern physicians on alternative medicine, an interview is conducted with those interested in expressing their opinions on the issue. The data are then analyzed and summarized according to the objectives of this study.

7.1 Discussions and Conclusions

Due to modern medicine being unable to cure all illnesses and its weaknesses, a group of people have sought other treatment forms to heal their sicknesses. As a consequence, the present trend of alternative medicine is popular both nationally and internationally.

As for alternative medicine found in Thailand, it is revealed that there are no less than 38 sciences of alternative health science that is the body of knowledge derived from other societies and cultures. From the 1997-1998 preliminary study of the Office of Public Health Policy and Planning, it is found that 35 sciences have been

in the service systems of both modern and alternative medicines. These sciences have been spread into the Thai society by various means.

This study focuses on alternative medicine at Balavi Natural Health Center in Bangkok, which is operated by two modern physicians interested in applying alternative medical sciences to treating patients with the least drug use. Another concept is to provide health care knowledge to the public so that they could put it into regular practice. Public relations campaigns have been launched to publicize the center. The center is a private health business providing alternative medical treatments of indigenous peoples. Most of the patients coming to the center have undergone modern medical treatments. Conclusions of the study results are as follows:

7.1.1 Concepts and Service Patterns of the Center

Present socio-economic conditions have limited health care of the public. Various ailments are behavior-related, such as, obesity, heart disease, high cholesterol or hypertension. Furthermore, modern medicine could not completely respond to sickness conditions of the people. With a vision of perceiving these problems, the founders of Balavi Natural Health Center have given another choice for patients to seek treatments. Although they are modern physicians, their practices are different from mainstream ones by integrating folk medical sciences with diagnostic principles of the modern medical system. The center has improved weaknesses of modern medicine and applied the holistic treatment, which is a strength of alternative medicine. For instance, the physicians give ample time to patients and provide advice and counseling to them and their relatives so that everyone in the family is involved. The treatment focuses on physical, psychological, emotional and social aspects of the patients simultaneously, which are completely different from modern medicine. Trends of alternative medicine in other countries have been popular and spread into Thailand, attracting health-conscious people. Many patients coming to the center have been disappointed in modern medicine, turning themselves to a different kind of treatment. They want to have both modern and alternative treatment at the same time so that they could complement each other.

According to Klienman's health care and medical systems in the society and the concept of alternative medicine, a complicated society will have many forms of health care. In general, the health care system in a society would comprise popular, professional and folk sectors. The three sectors are separate but interdependent and each one has its unique medical explanation and treatments. A perspective of alternative medicine is that there is no absolute in any medical system. As a consequence, the center has been trying to integrate strengths of many medical systems so that treatments could be most complete and holistic.

7.1.2 Service Users and their Illness

1) Types of service users at the center

Female patients at the center are three times as much as their male counterparts. Most of them are well educated, economically affluent and reside in Bangkok. The majority of them are 50 years and over, followed by those aged 13-49 years.

2) Types of illnesses

Most service users are suffering from chronic ailments, particularly cancer, stress, insomnia, diabetics, and hypertension. All of them have undergone modern medical treatments, but they could not be cured or they have encountered service problems of modern and other medical systems. Therefore, they have sought alternative remedies at the center. The investigation of service users and types of illnesses is based on the concept of health and sickness posited by Preecha Upayokhin. Diseases and sicknesses inevitably occur to everyone and each society has its own healing systems based on its belief. Pluralism of the medical systems exists in Thai society. While the modern medical system is the mainstream, alternative medical systems from other societies have been prevalent. Whatever the system, each has its ways of healing and when sickness occurs, the sick choose to be treated according to their socio-cultural beliefs. Some choose alternative treatments while most prefer mainstream medical treatments. Whatever they choose, the ultimate goal is to be in good health.

7.1.3 Factors Affecting the Selection of Treatment at the Center

From the investigation, it is found that there are several factors affecting the selection of treatment at the center. The investigation is also based on behavior and seeking of treatment in developing countries.

Most service users at the center were female, aged 50 years and over living in Bangkok. They were suffering from cancer the most, followed by diabetics, hypertension and stress. When sickness occurred, they would evaluate its symptoms and severity. If the sickness was not serious, they might opt for the wait-and-see or no action, or non-medicine self treatment or self-medicine treatment. If the sickness required professional treatment, they would consider where to seek the treatment. As for their current sickness, they knew that it required treatment from medical professionals. They then opted for hospitals which are modern medical centers, thinking that with high medical technology, the system could deal with their ailments. However, when the treatment was ineffective or there were serious side effects or they were not satisfied with the modern medicine, they turned to the alternative medical system without neglecting western medicine completely. They wanted the two systems to complement each other. With a popular trend of alternative medicine and public relations campaigns of Balavi Natural Health Center, the well educated and economically affluent middle class are interested in and have a positive attitude toward the alternative medical treatments. These are predisposing factors defining the choices of services at the center because the educated middle class have a capability to receive academic health information from printed materials, television programs, lectures and the internet. The enabling factor of service users is chronic diseases that the modern medicine can still not deal with, such as, cancer. Moreover, they believe that causes of those ailments are bad eating habit and lifestyle. Modern medical treatments would only increase chemical accumulation in the body. Therefore, natural health treatments at the center, which adjust their eating habit and lifestyle, should be beneficial to health, strengthening their health and lessening their sickness. Another enabling factor is good and stable economic status of service users since the treatment expenditure is relatively high. Furthermore, the health services system factors of the center are also favorable. The center is conveniently located, having a fully equipped

medical center. The medical clinic is legally recognized and treatments are based on modern medical knowledge. The Balavi alternative medical center is managed and supervised by modern medical doctors, clean, safe and fully equipped with caring and knowledgeable personnel providing advice and services. These factors affect and influence the decision-making of service users to select the center for treatment.

Other factors affecting the selection to choose services at the center are as follows:

- 1) Medical personnel

The doctors providing treatment at the center are Dr. Banchob and Dr. Natha Junhasawasdikul, who are modern medical physicians, knowledgeable and socially accepted. Being modern physicians adds an advantage to the center in terms of reliability. They are interested in combining alternative medicine with modern medical knowledge as a distinctive treatment. In addition, they were pioneers in this field when the alternative medicine was little known in the country. Although alternative medicine has been widely used nowadays, with long reputation and continuous public relations campaigns, the reputation of the doctors is evident among people interested in alternative health care. These factors lead to a decision-making to seek remedies here and it is acceptable to some groups of patients if the treatments are effective.

- 2) Treatment patterns

The treatments are a combination between modern and alternative medical systems. The clinic is legally recognized and medical check-ups and diagnosis are based on modern medical principles. Drug treatment is minimally used as necessary, but the main focus is on vitamins and food supplements. The center carries out rehabilitation activities, applying folk medical sciences from other countries and adapting them to suit local contexts. These sciences have been proved that they are safe as there had been trials and errors by real human beings for a long time. Each pattern has its own reasons of treatment. Treatment patterns are different from those of modern medical science, but the reasons and goals are to cure ailments. A popular notion is that using the two medical systems to cure illnesses should be more effective than relying solely on either of them.

3) Disappointment in the modern medical system

Some serious and chronic diseases like cancer could not be completely dealt with by modern medicine. Suffering from side effects also discourages patients and many lose faith and hope in the modern medical system, motivating them to seek other alternative remedies. Coming to the center is the last resort for some patients who hope that alternative treatments would make them better.

4) Present alternative medical trend in Thai society

The trend of alternative medicine is popular in Thailand, making people in health and in sickness and those disappointed from modern medicine interested in alternative medical plans. Being a famous and complete alternative medical center, the Balavi center could respond to the current trend needs in alternative treatment for a group of people in the society.

5) Needs for a combination of alternative and modern medical treatment

Modern medicine is not complete in healing sicknesses. From this investigation, it is revealed from service users that modern medical treatments cause unfavorable physical side effects in addition to the gap of patient-doctor relationship and stress from hospital visits. However, modern medicine could not be completely denied. When people become sick, they would first think of western medical system and have put their trust in it for a long time. Alternative medicine is used to complement the mainstream one for maximum treatment effects. The investigation also reveals that natural health treatment is safe and promotes stronger and better health. Combining the two systems should be more effective than depending solely on either one of them.

6) Location, access and physical characteristics

Location of a medical center is important for a decision to seek treatment. The center is conveniently situated with easy access. It is a clean and suitable place, equipped with modern instrument and efficient personnel. With a relaxed atmosphere, coming to this place is no longer stressful. These factors affect the decision-making of patients to have services at the center.

7) Public relations

Public relations of the center is outstanding because the reputation of the center is well-known. Different media are used to access the target group, be they articles published in journals, pocket books, television programs, lectures and the internet. The media are in line with the objective of accessing the wealthy and educated middle class since the contents are academically related to sickness and health care methods based on natural health. The information publicizes to the target group what types of treatment and where the location is.

The concept on public relations for marketing is compared and marketing strategies of the center are realized. The center considers which products or health services are interesting to consumers. It is found that health care and alternative health are in trend locally and internationally. Thus, the center, a long-time pioneer in alternative medicine, has developed service patterns that are interesting to the target group. It has developed a natural health course which is convenient for customers. During the course, activities are suitably organized and interesting since they are different from conventional ones. Patterns and times of services are suitable to avoid treatment-related stress among patients. The price for services is defined. Despite relatively high prices, better health and satisfaction with the services they obtain are cost-effective. Although most patients comment that the price is too expensive, they accept it when they get better and the treatment is effective. Regarding the place, the center is conveniently located with easy access and modern equipment. Marketing promotion of the center is proactive to create needs for and positive attitude toward alternative health treatment and care. Various kinds of media are exploited to publicize the center and its services so those service users would understand, be interested in and accept this alternative medical system.

7.2 Recommendations

Due to the center being an alternative medical center, it must prove to the public and patients effectiveness and potentiality of alternative medicine, be it illness treatment or development of the place. To maintain its acceptance among the public

and existence in the society, the center is required to develop alternative medical science continuously to accommodate sickness of people in the society all the time. The center should maintain its good characteristics, which are strengths of alternative and holistic medicine, for instance, patient-doctor relationship, safe treatment without physical violence and harm and concept of providing both physical and mental treatment. The center should evaluate and follow-up patients after they have undergone treatment to obtain information on effectiveness and satisfaction for further improvement. Public relations campaigns should be launched regularly to raise awareness on and acceptance in alternative medicine in the public. Moreover, the price should be lowered in some occasions to provide individuals interested in alternative medicine an opportunity to get services. The treatment is considered good and beneficial to the general public since it could be put into practice for the whole lifetime.

The society itself should have a correct attitude toward alternative medicine. People should understand the nature of alternative medicine that is different from that of the mainstream medicine with regard to concepts and treatment methods. In particular, modern physicians react to the medicine as doubtful. In fact, there is no single medical system in any society and the mainstream medical system in Thai society is not absolute in itself. Health care techniques and treatments could be improved and changed according to the period and needs of the society. As a consequence, alternative medicine is another choice and right of the public in selecting treatments when they are not in good health.

7.3 Recommendations for Further Studies

This investigation focuses only on Balavi Natural Health Center without data on opinions of people interested in and running medical businesses of this kind. The results of the investigation are only a pattern of services of a private alternative medical center without comparing with other alternative centers. It is thus still unable to completely conclude that problems of this center represent or are similar to those of other alternative agencies. It is therefore recommended that a comparative study on service systems of other alternative medical centers be carried out to get an overview of the problems as closely to the fact as possible.

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW GUIDES

An interview guide for the doctors who established and operates Balavi Natural Health Center

1. Information about the founders and operators of the center
2. General information of the center : physical aspects and structure
3. Background of the center : Origin and objectives in establishing the center
4. Operational characteristics of the center
5. Services of the center and different methods of natural health therapy
6. Activities of the center, e.g., detoxification tours, books
7. Public relations of the center
8. Responses to the needs in natural health therapy of the public
9. Future trends and directions of the center.
10. Operational problems and difficulties of the center

An interview guide for service users at the center

Part 1.

1. General information : age, sex, marital status, occupation, monthly income and educational level
2. Number of times seeking services at the center.
3. Last time coming to the center
4. Symptoms or illnesses
5. Previous treatments before coming to the center
6. Results of and satisfaction with previous treatments
7. Reasons for seeking treatments at the center
8. How do you know the center?
9. Besides yourself, do you know anyone having had treatments at the center? How do others talk about the center?
10. After having undergone treatments at the center, how is your health? Are there any changes?

11. How is natural health treatment different from treatments at hospital? Whether and how are you satisfied with it?
12. Give your opinions on the venue, communication, services and treatment at the center.
13. After the treatment, would you recommend others to come? Why?
14. Do you think natural health therapy should accompany modern treatment? Should we focus on only one of them? Why?
15. Do you think the expenditure is suitable and cost-effective?
16. What are your expectations before coming to the center?
17. Give your opinions on the center, the physicians and alternative medical treatments

Part 2.

1. What does “health” mean in your opinions? How is “healthy” like?
2. When do you think you become sick?
3. Who confirms your illness or where is your illness detected?
4. What do you think are the causes of your illness?
5. How serious is your illness? Could it be curable? How?
6. How do you prevent illness? Who told you?

An interview guide for modern medical doctors

1. In your opinions, is modern medical treatment sufficient to cover all illnesses?
2. Give you opinions on alternative medicine and an increasing trend of alternative medicine
3. As a modern medical doctor, do you think alternative medicine could take some burdens from modern medicine?
4. Do you believe in the effectiveness of alternative treatments?
5. If a patient chose to combine modern and alternative medical treatments, would the results of modern treatment be changed? Would there be any negative effects on modern medical treatments?
6. If modern medical treatment was ineffective, would you recommend the patients to try alternative treatment?
7. In the future, do you think alternative medicine would become more acceptable?

BIOGRAPHY

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