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NUSARA NIMNOY : HEALTH SEEKING BEHAVIOR OF PATIENTS
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This exploratory descriptive research is designed to explore patterns of health seeking behavior of patients with non-insulin dependent diabetes mellitus (NIDDM). Factors which influence health seeking behavior, the alternative health care system sectors and Kleinman's model of health care systems were used to guide the study. The selected sample consisted of 30 patients with NIDDM. In-depth interviews and audiotape recordings were used to collect the data. Data were analysed by content analysis method.

Results of the study reveal that in defining the symptoms, 52.2% of the patients with NIDDM noticed that typical symptoms occurred but had no idea of what they were. 26.1% of the subjects suspected they were ill, but non-related to diabetes (DM). Only 21.7% of the subjects suspected they had DM. Concerning symptoms management, most of the subjects first used the popular sector such as waiting and self-treatment before they decided to seek care from alternative sectors both professional and folk (78.3%). Only 21.7% of the subjects used the professional sector such as government hospitals or private hospitals. Furthermore the subjects explained the cause of DM as dietary (33.3%). The health seeking behavior had three patterns : using both the popular and professional sectors, using only the professional sector, and using the popular, professional and folk sectors. They may have used 2-3 sectors at the same time or interchangeably. Factors influencing health seeking behavior included health care systems, health care providers and client factors. Today, most subjects use the professional sectors to treat DM(66.7%). 33.3% of the subjects combine the professional and popular sectors. However when comparing these two groups with the normal blood sugar level, both had a similar percentage of deficiencies of blood sugar levels, and most of them could not control the blood sugar level.

These results increase understanding of patients with NIDDM about the explanation of illness, the decision-making process of seeking health care, and provide information for developing a health care system for diabetic control. The three sectors of the health care system should be integrated consistently with each individual life style.