

4037386 SHMS/M : MAJOR: MEDICAL AND HEALTH SOCIAL SCIENCES;

M.A. (MEDICAL AND HEALTH SOCIAL SCIENCES)

KEY WORDS : POPULAR THOUGHT AND BELIEFS / ORAL PRACTICES
/ QUALITATIVE STUDY

PIYACHAT PATCHARANUCHAT: POPULAR BELIEFS AND PRACTICES
REGARDING ORAL HEALTH: A VILLAGE CASE STUDY FROM KHONKAEN
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HONGVIVAT, Ph.D. 158 P. ISBN 974-664-473-4.

The purpose of this study was to explore popular beliefs and practices regarding oral health in one village in Khon Kaen province. Different qualitative data collection techniques were used including informal interviews of 21 key informants, in-depth interviews of 9 community key informants, in-depth interviews and participant observation in 10 familial case studies.

The findings of the study were that popular thought, beliefs and practices regarding oral health in this village were influenced by their lifestyles, socio-cultural context and environment. Usually, such beliefs and practices were shaped by both the villagers' own experiences and their neighbors'. Some of them were fitting to medical knowledge, while some were not. Some prevailing beliefs included the concept of *strength tooth*, *Mang Kin Fun* (popular term for tooth-decayed germ), *Prasart sere* (closed to neuro-side effects of tooth extraction in medical term). Most oral health practices aimed for social impacts or emergency symptoms relief. Care seeking for oral illness depended on severity and past experience of oral care. The oral value, problem and practices were changed by individual and community conditions, as well as the transition of socio-cultural context such as variation of tooth value related to age, gender, status and fashion, pain relief procedure, the existence of denture maker, etc. The understanding from the present study should help health care providers to administer appropriate medical and dental interventions that are culturally suitable to popular thought, beliefs and lifestyle to improve public oral health goals.