

Thesis title        A Study on Health Service Seeking Process of Women With Valvular Heart  
Disease in Bangkok

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Date of Graduation 28 May B.E.2540 (1997)

## ABSTRACT

Valvular heart disease is a chronic disease increasingly found in women especially in working state. One of the important problems in caring of the women with valvular heart disease is that most of them have developed complication before seeking health service from hospitals. Given the nature of women's socialization and their role in Thai society, and the fact that in the early phase of valvular heart disease the symptoms may not clearly show, most women delay treatment and as a result have complications.

The purpose of this study was to analyse the process of health service seeking of women with Valvular Heart Disease in Bangkok. The samples consisted of 200 women who attended heart disease clinic at the Out-Patient Department, as well as female valvular heart disease patients admitted to heart disease wards in Government hospitals in Bangkok. The data were collected using Semi-structured questionnaire guideline developed by the investigator. Data were analysed by grouping and presented in qualitative styles.

The results of the study revealed the following :

1. The majority of subjects (25.0%) were between 35-44 years old, married (65.5%), primary education level (62.0%), without any job (51.5%) and 36.1% of the subjects earned income between 3,001-6,000 baht per month. Most of the subjects (37.0%) performed three roles. Twenty-four percent had the disease for less than one year (24.0%).

2. Health service seeking process covered 3 steps as follow :

#### Step 1 Illness Recognition, Symptom Definition and Management

Health service seeking process started as soon as they realized that something had gone wrong. There were 9 symptoms recognized by the subjects. The first three most common symptoms were joint pain (32.0%), sore throat (18.8%) and tired (14.6%). The women with valvular heart disease defined these symptoms as "Common Cold" (41.0%), "Bone Disease" (23.5%) and "Lung Disease" (12.0%). Only 10.0% suspected that they were the symptoms of heart disease. For the management to symptoms, all of the subjects (100.0%) applied self treatment. Fifty-six percent of the subjects did self-treatment for 3-6 months.

#### Step 2. Selection of Health Service Agency

For the selection of health service agency, the women sought advice from family members and the people around them. There was a variety of health service agencies that the women went for services i.e. traditional medical center, voluntary health center, private drug stores, health center, mobile health service, community hospital, regional hospital, government general hospital in Bangkok, clinics and private general hospital. The reason that underlied the selection of the health service agencies was "getting worse" (25.2%). The reason for coming to the present hospital was "getting worse" (22.2%), too.

#### Step 3 Evaluation and Changing of the Health Service Agency

The women receiving treatment from other health service agencies before coming to the present hospital recognized from the result of the symptoms after treatment that they were getting worse (60.0%). The underlying reasons for their decisions in changing from previous agency to the current hospital were "getting worse" (45.3%), high cost of service (21.0%) and only 0.3% from "watching television about King's treatment".

From the result of the study, the investigator suggested that nurses need to provide knowledge and information regarding rheumatic fever and valvular heart disease to women and families. This is to assure that appropriate steps are taken in order to get appropriate health service at an early phase of the disease.