

Thesis title A Study on Health Service Seeking Process of Women With Hypertension
in the Southern Region

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ABSTRACT

Hypertension is a chronic disease increasingly found in women. At the early phase of hypertension disease, the symptoms may not clearly show. Thus, treatment is delayed and most women get complications. The purpose of the study was to analyze the health service seeking process of women with hypertension in the southern region of Thailand. The sample consisted of 200 women with hypertension who attended the Out Patient Department, as well as female hypertension patients hospitalized at the Songkla and Surajitani hospital. The data was collected using semi-structured interview guidelines developed by the investigator. Data were analyzed by grouping and presenting in quantitative styles. The results of the study were as follow :

1. The majority of subjects (66.0%) were older than 60 years, married (57.0%), primary education level (72.0%), no occupation (59.5%), 34.5% of the subjects earned income between 1001-5000 baht per month. Most of the subjects (75.5%) performed few roles. Fifty-four percent have had hypertension for one to five years.

2. Health service seeking process covered 3 steps.

Step 1: Illness Recognition, Symptom Definition and Management. There were 22 symptoms recognized by the subjects. The first three most frequent symptoms were dizziness (45.5%), headache (40.5%) and fainting (27.5%). The women defined those symptoms as "diseases of the aged"(35.0%), "normal headache"(28.5%) and "stress or neurosis" (13.5%). Only 2.0% suspected that they were the symptoms of hypertension. For the management to symptoms,

most of the subjects applied self-treatment (83.5%). 41.5% of the subjects waited and applied self treatment for 1-6 months. The women sought advice from family members, friends and neighborhood health workers and then they went to health service agency or to meet the doctors.

Step 2: Selection of Health Service Agency. There were a variety of health service agencies that the subjects went to for services i.e. private clinic, community hospital, regional hospital, university hospital, private general hospital, general hospital as well as community health center and traditional medical center, and private drugstores. The reasons for the selection of the health service agencies were close-by agency, and transportation accessibility (23.7%). The reason for coming to the current hospital was the implementation of welfare program (36.5%).

Step 3: Evaluation and Changing of the Health Service Agency. The subjects received an evaluation of the health care service prior to coming to the current hospital. The study revealed that almost half of the subjects perceived the moderate improvement of their illness(46.4%). The reasons for the changing of Health Service were the high cost of service and can not be used with welfare program (29.4%), belief that treatment did not make improvement and more serious symptom (19.6%). They decided to come to the current hospital.

As the result of education, the researcher suggests that there should be a proper data concerning hypertension disease given to women and their families so every women, no matter status, is able to recognize the correct symptoms of hypertension and gets good health service from the early phase of disease.