

Studies concerning socioeconomic and medical problems of the elderly in Khon Kaen Province, Northeast Thailand, were conducted in 1989 - 1990.

The objectives of these studies were as follows:-

1. to measure nutritional status and eating habit.
2. to investigate parasitic infection and curative behavior.

A total of 464 elderly persons from a semi-urban area and a rural area of Khon Kaen Province were sampled by the 30 cluster sampling technique in each area.

The method is composed of an interview by structured questionnaire, an in-depth interview, a 24-hour recall interview, stool examination and anthropometry by height and weight measurement.

The results revealed that most of the elderly live with their relatives and or children and have been taken care of by their relatives.

Half of the total elderly are widowed and primary educated; and 22.4 per cent are small shopkeepers. 66.3 percent were smoker which mostly are males; 37.1 per cent were drinkers. Seventy-six per cent of the total elderly group habitually chewed areca nuts and betel leaves smeared with lime; 36.4 per cent consumed improperlycooked food.

Illness prevalence of elderly during the previous 2 weeks, was found that the number of sick elderly in the semi-urban area was slightly higher than those in the rural area. Some illness

such as fever & cold occurred 49% and 31.7% in rural elderly and semi-urban elderly respectively, diarrhoea and dysentery were found 11.9% and 4.9% compared to 7.7% and 3.2% for these two groups, body or back pain was 74.5% and 65.1% respectively.

Curative behavior or health seeking behavior when getting ill of the elderly was found as following; 42.2 percent go to see doctor at health station or clinic and 39% had self medication.

Nutritional status of elderly, using body mass index (BMI) calculated from weight and height revealed that rural elderly were lean significantly much more than those in semi-urban area. (BMI < 20 kg/m<sup>2</sup>)

During the previous 24 hours, more than one-third of the elderly consumed protein, calcium, vitamin B<sub>1</sub> and B<sub>2</sub> in less than the recommended amounts.

The prevalence rates for parasitic infections in the semi-urban area and the rural area were 53.64 per cent and 66.67 per cent, respectively.

The highest prevalence rate was for liver fluke Opisthorchis viverrini. Hookworm and minute intestinal flukes were the second and third most common parasitic infections. The prevalence of parasitic infections more than one kind of parasite in the elderly in the rural area was significantly higher than in the semi-urban area.