

Thesis Title Factors Influencing Usage of Blood Lipid Lowering
Health Food

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ABSTRACT

The general objective of this study was to identify factors and processes influencing people to use health food. Blood lipid lowering health food was used as a representative of other health food products. An interview questionnaire and another self-administered questionnaire were used for data collection from 85 blood lipid lower health food users who bought these products from drug stores and 100 hyperlipidemia patients who had their antihyperlipidemic prescriptions filled at Ramathibodi Hospital. The respondents were classified into 3 groups: drug user group, health food plus drug user group, and health food user group.

The results showed that most of health food users were middle-age adults, with bachelor degrees or higher, had high income, and were more concerned about their health. On the contrary, drug users were either retirees or those who did not in the work force, had lower level of education and lower income. Characteristics of health food plus drug users were something in between the other two groups. Health food users were less likely to believe in fate and other people to control their health than that of drug users. Moreover, they got high scores in perception of severity of coronary heart

diseases and perception of benefit of taking these health food products, but had low perception of barriers of usage. For knowledge about hyperlipidemia and knowledge about health food products, there were no significant differences among the three groups of respondents on their average scores about these knowledges. The major sources of information about health food products were articles from books or magazines, drug stores, and advertising brochure.

Garlic products were ranked first as the most frequently used among the two groups of health food users. Lecithin, fish oil, safflower products, and evening primrose oil were ranked second, third, fourth and fifth place, respectively. Most of health food users in both groups used only one product daily for 1-6 months. Less than half of all health food users evaluated the efficacy of the usage as good except for garlic products which fifty-seven percent of the users felt good after use.

Six independent factors were selected for path analysis; education, income, health alert, knowledge about products and disease, chance in reaching the promotional media, and beliefs in product efficacy. The results showed that only two of six variables, beliefs in product efficacy and chance in reaching the promotional media, had direct effects influencing the behavior of these health food usage (adjusted $R^2 = 0.24$, $p < 0.0001$).

The finds from this study give us more understanding in behavior of blood lipid lowering health food users which is useful for preventing the danger from the misuse of the products and maybe useful for the local products development as health food products as well. However, more studies about behavior of other health food products usage or in other groups of people and studies about efficacy of health food in Thai people are needed.