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SOMPONE PHANGMANIXAY: HEALTH SEEKING BEHAVIOUR OF
VILLAGERS WHO HAD SUFFERED FROM MALARIA IN HOUAXAY
DISTRICT, BOKEO PROVINCE, LAO-THAI BORDER. THESIS ADVISORS:
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This study was conducted with the aim to determine the health-seeking behavior of villagers who had suffered from malaria in Houaxay district Bokeo province, Lao PDR. A quantitative approach using questionnaires was undertaken among 216 respondents who had got malaria in the last six months. The study tried to find out the pattern of health seeking behavior of the villagers and investigated the behavior associated with their experience on malaria illness, knowledge (about symptoms, diagnosis and treatment), their belief in modern treatment and their socio-demographic characteristics. The study was undertaken in 12 villages in Houaxay district. Trained interviewers conducted the interview in March, 2000. The subjects were males and females age between 15 to 60 years.

The study results revealed that, in the last episode of malaria illness, most of the respondents (77.3 percent) used multiple steps for malaria treatment. Before respondents went for correct treatment at malaria services, clinics, 66.2 percent of them sought self-treatment pattern, 55.0 percent of them went to drug stores, 32.4 percent of them received malaria treatment from medical quack; 28.0 percent of them were late going to health personnel care for a week or more. In the first step of treatment seeking of the respondents, 72.2 percent of them sought incorrect treatment places. In the last step of treatment seeking of the respondents, 78.7 percent of them sought correct treatment places; 82.4 percent of them knew at least one anti-malaria drug, 50.5 percent of them knew Chloroquine and 44.4 percent knew Quinine, but 88.5 percent of those who used Chloroquine and 66.7 percent of those who used Quinine used incorrect doses. Regarding the underlying factors of health seeking pattern, socio-demographic characteristics of respondents (age, education, occupation, ethnicity and religion), knowledge concerning on malaria, belief in modern treatment, experience with malaria illness were significantly associated with health seeking behavior.

Further research based on both quantitative and qualitative methods need to be conducted for the better understanding of health seeking behavior and for additional underlying factors such as other psychological factors and quality of health services, which are not included in this study.