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LI XIAOMEI: WOMEN'S PERCEPTION OF QUALITY OF SERVICES AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THEIR CONTINUED UTILIZATION OF HEALTH CARE FOR REPRODUCTIVE TRACT INFECTIONS IN RURAL YUNNAN, CHINA. THESIS ADVISORS: ORATAI RAUYAJIN , Dr.P.H. , SUVAJEE GOOD, Ph. D., VANAWIPHA PASANDHANATORN, M.A., KAINING ZHANG, M.P.H. 165p. ISBN 974-664-049-6

This is a cross-sectional study aimed to explore women's perceptions of the quality of health care services and the accessibility of these services, and their influences on patients' continued utilization of health services. It was a quantitative study complemented with qualitative methods including in-depth interviews and focused group discussions. It was conducted in four villages of Tonghai county, Yunnan province, China during Nov. and Dec. 1999. The target population were married women who perceived themselves to have RTI symptoms and who had had at least one health care seeking experience.

It was found that the self-reported RTI symptoms in this study was 30.5%. Although the percentage of women seeking services for RTI symptoms was not low (56.6 percent), more than one-half of women (51.8 percent) sought services only once, after which, most of them (71.9 percent) still were troubled by those symptoms.

Women in this study were satisfied with the quality of services provided by the health care facilities, but this study found that women had not been given enough information about the cause, consequences, and the prevention of their disease, side effects of drugs, and follow-up visits to the health care facilities. The majority of women perceived the services they received as convenient and available, but most of them perceived the cost of services to be high.

Results based on logistic regression analysis showed that five variables were found to have effects on women's continued utilization of health services. Four variables, namely, perceived mechanisms to encourage continuity of health care, perceived doctor-patient information exchange, seeking services at village level clinics, and perceived respectful and responsive behavior of the doctor, had positive effects, while another variables, perceived waiting time had negative effects.

Based on the findings of the study, several recommendations were made in order to improve women's health care services in rural Yunnan. These recommendations included providing more information to women, improving health education, training health care providers, enhancing regular gynecological check-up in rural areas, and recommendations for further research.