ABSTRACT

This study was conducted with the aim of identifying the different health seeking patterns of people in Mae Sai District, Chaing Rai Province, Thailand. A quantitative approach had been undertaken among 200 respondents who had been ill during one month prior to the interview and were currently living in the Mae Sai district. The interview was conducted by trained interviewers in March, 1998. The subjects were males and females age between 15 and 82. The study results reveal that one fourth of the respondents did not use the health services for their illness. Regarding the underlying factors of health seeking patterns, people of low income and low socio-economic status who work as agricultural workers and laborers were found to underutilize the health services. The results also reveal that the respondents have a high level of satisfaction concerning the acceptability of health services, which is one of the related factors concerning health seeking patterns in this study. However, accessibility of health services in terms of distance from their residence, time spent for receiving services, and their satisfaction concerning medical expenses were not related with health seeking pattern in this study.

Based on the findings of this study, modern medical service is highly utilized in the study area and should be integrated with traditional medicine which became under utilized since 1980. It is important issue to highlight the underlying factors for utilizing drugs from drug stores as self-medication which can lead to haphazard drug treatment. Quality of care of the health services is an essential factor in all health services in achieving the goal of health for all.

Further research based on qualitative methods needs to be conducted for the better understanding of the health seeking patterns and for additional underlying factors such as psychological factors and cultural factors which were not included in this study. It was also mentioned to conduct the research from a social science approach in order to achieve holistic health care for the people.