ABSTRACT

Thai Traditional Medicine (TTM) would appear to be a reasonable alternative health choice for rural people. It increases self-reliance as well as promoting the utilization of traditional health care practices. This study investigates some factors influencing this utilization, the likes of socio-demographic, psychosocial, accessibility and availability of sources and information, cost and social support. A cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted in Saraburi province to determine the current situation of the utilization of traditional medicine by Thai rural people. Four types of TTM were examined including herbal medicine, food, massage and meditation. It was found that the respondents tended to use three or more TTM types, which appears to be a high rate of utilization.

Two hundred rural respondents were randomly selected and interviewed with structured questionnaires in four villages in Cha-oum Subdistrict in Khaeng Khoi District from January 21 to 27, 2002.

Most respondents were female, aged 30 to 39 years old, working as laborers with primary school education, with sufficient income for living. Most, (93.0%) were reported to have utilized TTM, and herbal medicine and herbal foods were the most popular types. One-third utilized more than two types of TTM.

Results indicated that only two factors were significantly associated with the utilization of TTM, namely chronic disease (p = 0.05) who were respondents with chronic disease themselves, and social support (p = 0.003) who were respondents who had received high social support, both of whom had utilized more types of TTM.

The recommendations of this study are that in order to promote and improve the utilization of TTM in the rural areas, clear information on TTM and its usefulness as treatment should be available to the public. Moreover, greater community participation should be encouraged in supporting the utilization of TTM. Further research should emphasize qualitative research with more randomized sampling and more advanced statistical tools in order to better explore and analyze the utilization of TTM.