

CHRONIC TREATMENT WITH THE WISDOM OF FOLK DOCTOR: CASE STUDY OF MR. IN KUSOLLAM, PATHUM THANI PROVINCE, THAILAND

Phatphong Kamoldilok,**Orawan Sinpaiboonlert,Ganya Purahong**

**Instructor of College of Allied Health Sciences, SuanSunandhaRajabhatUniversity, Bangkok, Thailand*

E-mail: phatphong.ka@ssru.ac.th

***Instructor of College of Allied Health Sciences, SuanSunandhaRajabhatUniversity, Bangkok, Thailand*

E-mail: Orawan.si@ssru.ac.th

****Instructor of College of Allied Health Sciences, SuanSunandhaRajabhatUniversity, Bangkok, Thailand*

E-mail: ganya.pu@ssru.ac.th

ABSTRACT

The research study of wisdom of folk doctor intellect in case study of Mr. In Kusollam in Pathumthani province. Its objective is to compile the knowledge and wisdom of folk doctor in the aspect of diagnosis chronic disease, methods and forms of treatment, outcomes or result of treatment, including studying the factor of folk healer in existence, and further study in depth by means of collecting information such as interview, participating observation, questionnaire and involved document study from the books in traditional scripture. All informations are gathered to content analysis. The result is found that Mr. In Kusollam has the age of 85, grade 4 education, living in Norngsamwang District, Amphour Norngsua, Pathumthani Province. He began learning traditional medicine in the age of 15 from followed his father to keep herbs at the forest and observed the preparation of herbal medicine for patients at a time, and can heal themselves.

Role of folk healer existence depend on the folk healer. Because the father is the original folk healers. It has been trusted by patients, come to many treatments. By opening their home for treatments and did not treat it, in addition patients, will make a donation. In addition to treatment, and treatment with medication. May use drugs to their patient to supply or take by themselves, boiled to eat at home. By the way, and eat carefully.

The diagnosis method, Mr. In has to checking medical history, checking body, asking and seeing the patient. When there is the result of a diagnosis from the hospital, he will be composed. The treatment of chronic diseases such as cancer, blood pressure, diabetes, nephritis will use herbal drug is common, in addition some diseases such as smallpox, breast cancer, shingles, Pleasanton wind sprints is treated with holy water, magic and more.

Outcomes most will cure all diseases. Some of the patients come to the hospital and then incurable such as cancer, Mr. In cured and then hundreds. Patients with kidney dialysis, eat a pot of herbal decoction 2 - 3 it is a relief. Do not need kidney dialysis again. Some diseases, new diseases such as AIDS, the world is searching for a cure. But then a lot of cure.

Key words: Folk Doctor, folk healer, Pleasanton wind sprints, holy water, prayers, Buddhist commandment, Indigenous

INTRODUCTION

Health problems are an important issue that affects people's lives and has broader impact on society, economy, education and national development. Health problems are a national level problem that affects the wellbeing of the people. To maintain good health, people need to be strong and fit, have good immunity, be

free from disease and have good mental health. However, diseases and health problems seem to be ever more prevalent. Some of the most significant and common diseases these days fall into the category of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), such as cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases, cancer, emphysema, hypertension, diabetes mellitus and obesity. These 6 diseases are among the most common causes of death.

NCDs are not caused by infection from a microbe or pathogen. They cannot be passed from one person to another through contact or body fluids, nor spread by another disease vector. They are mainly caused by internal factors in each individual, and are usually associated with lifestyle choices that are risk factors, such as smoking, drinking, over consumption of high-fat food, high-sodium food, and sugar, lack of exercise, stress, and even bad posture.

The most common NCDs with high mortalities are

1. Diabetes Mellitus
2. Cardiovascular & Cerebrovascular Diseases
3. Emphysema
4. Cancer
5. Hypertension
6. Obesity

The World Health Organization (WHO) warned that NCDs are a serious problem that is becoming more severe. Statistics from 2009 showed that NCDs were the cause of death in 63% of cases when the world population was taken as a whole. More importantly, more than 80% of people who died from NCDs were people living in developing countries. Worldwide statistics show that 17 million people a year die from cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases, or 48% of the deaths from NCDs. Cancer accounts for 21% of the deaths from NCDs, while emphysema, asthma and chronic lung diseases account for 12% (4.2 million people a year) and diabetes accounts for 4% (1.3 million people a year).

The latest statistics from Thailand show that 14 million people suffer from NCDs, and NCDs are one of the major causes of death. In 2009 more than 300,000 people died from NCDs in Thailand, or 73% of total deaths. This equates to economic losses of an estimated 200 billion baht a year from NCDs. The figures also show that the percentage of mortality from NCDs in Thailand is higher than the world average, and it appears likely to continue rising in the future.

A survey of adults in Thailand in 2009 found that

- 21.4% had hypertension, and the percentage of people who were aware they had the disease, had access to treatment, and were able to control the disease was quite low;
- 6.9% (3.2 million people) had high blood sugar, especially males, while 56.7% were aware they had the disease but only 27.1% were able to control it to an acceptable level;
- 19.4% or almost 9 million people had high blood cholesterol, especially females;
- Almost one in three were overweight and 8.5% were obese, and the percentage of obesity in males had risen by 4 times in the period 1992-2009.

Thai traditional medicine is interdisciplinary, using mixed methods including herbal treatments, massage, and prayers or incantations following ancient intellectual traditions that were developed and passed down through the generations. Thai traditional medicine is used to prevent and treat diseases and health problems. Thai traditional medicine practitioners have long experience in treating NCDs. You could almost say they consider NCDs to be common and relatively easy to cure. By contrast, treating NCDs through western or

modern medicine can be extremely costly, involving complicated procedures, high-cost equipment and expensive, long-term medication, when the outcome is often not even a satisfactory cure. On top of that, there is a shortage of modern doctors to treat all the patients with NCDs.

MohInKusonlum, 85, is a traditional Thai medicine practitioner in Nong Sam Wang Sub-district, NongSuea District, PathumThani Province, Thailand. He has more than 50 years' experience working as a community doctor. He is widely known and well respected as a traditional Thai medicine practitioner who has the knowledge and ability to treat patients, especially those with NCDs. Thus, he is a valuable resource person for studying the body of knowledge of traditional Thai medicine, which is a part of the intellectual heritage that is difficult to find. The researcher thus thought it was important to record, analyze and systematically organize this body of knowledge before it disappears from Thai society. The information gathered may be useful for the development of health care alternatives.

OBJECTIVES

1. To study the history, role and factors of success of Thai traditional medicine practitioners
2. To systematically collect and compile the body of knowledge of MohInKusonlum about traditional Thai medicine, including diagnosis, treatment methods, recipes and herbal ingredients.

METHODOLOGY

The research covers the history, body of knowledge, and local intellect of MohInKusonlum about diagnosis, treatment, use of herbs, and disease treatment.

This was a qualitative research with the intent to obtain holistic and reliable data. The researcher collected data in the community for 12 months, using the methods of in-depth interviews and participatory observation. The concepts and body of knowledge of MohInKusonlum about traditional Thai medicine were studied, along with his treatment methods. Data were also gathered about the way of life, customs, and beliefs of the people in the community to gain a deeper understanding of the context.

Study population

1. One traditional Thai medicine practitioner, MohInKusonlum, who was interviewed about his background, personal history, body of knowledge, learning process, methods of diagnosis and treatment, and the types of herbal medicine he prescribed.
2. 50 patients who had received treatment from MohInKusonlum

Selection of the study area

The study area was chosen through purposive sampling because it was the community where MohInKusonlum lives and works, in Nong Sam Wang Sub-district, NongSuea District, PathumThani Province, Thailand.

Type of research

Qualitative research methods were used. Data were collected in the community to obtain holistic and reliable data. Data were collected on MohInKusonlum's history and treatment methods as well as data about the way of life of people in the community, the local geography and society, local customs and culture, people's beliefs, attitudes towards traditional Thai medicine, and their faith in traditional medicine practitioners.

Research methodology

1. For the review of the literature, data were collected from documents, journals, books, and research reports about NCDs and Thai traditional medicine
2. Data from MohInKusonlum, his patients, and people in the community were collected through interviews and informal questioning as well as participatory observation
3. The research tools were an audio recorder, digital camera, and notebooks to record data and notes from the interviews, informal questioning and participatory observation

Data analysis

1. Facts were checked and data was summarized to meet the research objectives
2. Data were analyzed
3. The conclusions were printed and reports distributed to the target audience

RESULTS

MohInKusonlum was the third child of his parents, born on 5 August 1932, and was 85 years old at the time of the study. For formal education, he completed fourth grade. He lives at house number 35/7 Nong Sam Wang Sub-district, NongSuea District, PathumThani Province. His father was named YooKusonlum and his mother was named Foy Kusonlum. They had three children and the other two have died now. Moh In's father was a traditional Thai medicine practitioner, who had learned the profession from his father.

Moh In's grandfather was from Vientiane, Laos. He married Moh In's grandmother, who was a Thai lady from UbonRatchathani Province. Moh In's grandfather learned traditional medicine from practitioners in Laos and Cambodia, and taught his methods to his son (Moh In's father). Moh In started to learn about traditional medicine practice when he was 13. His father took him along to go and find herbs in the forest. He learned which kinds of plants can be used to make medicine, and memorized their names and properties. After a collecting expedition, he would help his father separate out the herbs, clean them, chop or grind them, and prepare them for use as medicine. His father taught him and closely advised him up until the time he died.

When Moh In was 21, he became ordained as a Buddhist monk for 3 years. After he left the monkhood he went to learn more about traditional medicine from his uncle, MohChomKusonlum. He gained the knowledge and ability to treat patients, diagnose diseases, select herbal remedies, and give appropriate prescriptions. From then on, he was able to work as a traditional Thai medicine practitioner on his own.

Dr. In's daily schedule

Moh In wakes up at about 4:00 a.m. every morning and prays and then meditates. He says that meditation makes his mind calm and gives him more mental power to treat patients, so that he is able to identify what disease each patient has, and whether it is due to karma, black magic, or physical decline. He is able to know not only the cause of the disease but also whether or not it is curable. After praying and attending to personal business, Moh In will sit on his porch and wait for patients to come in. He will treat every patient that comes until there are no more patients, but does not feel tired at all. He says he never needs to take a nap during the day, and attributes his stamina to his meditation practice.

Continued practice and relationship with patients

In the past, traditional medicine practitioners were very accepted and well respected by the public. People in the community relied on them for medical treatment. However, after western medicine came to Thailand, the popularity of traditional medicine practitioners began to decline. Large numbers of people went to modern hospitals to get modern medical treatment, because they had better equipment for diagnosing diseases and more advanced treatments like surgery. Nevertheless, as previously stated, modern medicine does not provide all the answers for people suffering from NCDs. That is why some people still turn to practitioners of traditional Thai medicine for treatment of NCDs.

Moh In said the strong point of traditional medicine practitioners is that they have a close relationship with their patients. They are neighbors living in the same community. The patients come to see them at their own house. The practitioners have plenty of time to give their patients. They have a very warm and friendly bedside manner, treating their patients like relatives. They welcome everyone hospitably. Another point is the expense. Moh In does not charge his patients anything except a minimal consultation fee of only 12 baht for each visit. He gives all this money for charitable donations without keeping any for himself. Usually, after a patient is cured, he or she will want to give a voluntary extra payment to Moh In, but it is entirely up to how much they can afford.

Besides treating patients at his home, sometimes Moh In will be asked to make a house call at another location, but this is not often. Sometimes former patients from the community ask him to go with them to treat one of their relatives in another place. The other duties that Moh In performs on a regular basis are to officiate at ceremonies to set up spirit houses, lay the foundation pillar for a new house, open a new place of business, or do Feng Shui consultation. These requests are fairly frequent, about 4-5 times a month.

As for his professional ethics, Moh In follows the rules passed down to him by his father. The main ones are

1. Never violate the third Buddhist commandment (no sexual misconduct), which means never getting involved with anyone's daughter or wife
2. Do not charge for medical services. Serve the poor for free.
3. Welcome all patients and their relatives on an equal basis.
4. Treat patients to the best of your ability and do not conceal any knowledge.

Diagnosis methods

To make a diagnosis, Moh In will ask the patient about his or her medical history, details about all the symptoms, how long they have had them, their lifestyle, profession, diet, and the medical history of their family. He also asks if they have been to any other doctors for treatment before, and if so, what treatment they were advised to take. Then he will do a physical check to determine the cause of disease so that he can decide on the best treatment.

Treatment methods

After he is sure of the diagnosis, Moh In will inform the patient and his or her relatives what the problem is and what treatment he plans to use. If they give consent, then he will proceed with the treatment, which is either a herbal prescription or another traditional method. He will explain how to use the remedy, what they should do when they get home, and if there are any activities or foods they should avoid for a speedy recovery.

Number of patients

Moh In treats both male and female patients of every age. Most of his patients are local people from the community and some from other areas of the province. A few come from other provinces, because they went to clinics or hospitals and were not cured, but they heard about Moh In through word of mouth. Throughout his years of practice, Moh In has treated thousands of patients.

The majority of patients that have been treated by Moh In have recovered from their diseases. The number one disease is cancer, or about 28% of cases, followed by migraines (16%), diabetes and psoriasis (12%).

For treating cancer, Moh In uses a universal herbal treatment for most forms of cancer, such as liver cancer, lung cancer, colon cancer and cervical cancer. This will kill the disease at its root so it will not recur. The ingredients used include cobra bone, sarsaparilla (*Smilax glabra* Wall. ex Roxb.), *Smilax cerbularia*, white siris (*Albizia procera* (Roxb.) Benth.), heartwood of ebony tree and others. The ingredients are boiled and the patient drinks one cup of the concoction three times a day before meals. After finishing three to five pots full, the patient will usually be better and cured.

As for breast cancer, Moh In gave the opinion that it is not actually cancer as most people believe, but it is a lymph node inflammation. For treatment, he chants an incantation on a cup of liquor and then sprays it on the infected breast, then applies red lime paste while saying another prayer. After getting this treatment once a day for three days, the patient will be cured. The exception is people who have previously received radiation therapy from a modern hospital; they cannot be cured. Moh In said if his memory is correct, he has cured more than 100 cases of breast cancer. Two of them died, one because she had received radiation and the other because she died of old age at 99 years of age.

For treating diabetes and hypertension, Moh In prescribes a herbal infusion made from seven leaves of Queen's flower tree (*Lagerstroemia speciosa* (L.) Pers) boiled in water. After consuming seven pots of this infusion, the patient will be cured. This is consistent with a finding of modern science, which reported that Queen's flower tree leaves contain corrosive acid, which has a similar property to insulin for lowering blood sugar and controlling the blood sugar level. It can be used to treat diabetes and hypertension.

For abdominal obesity Moh In uses nutgrass (*Cyperusrotundus*L.), which is dry cooked to brown and then used to make tea. After a few days of taking it, the patient's excess fat will be shed through the urine and sweat until they no longer have a fat belly.

Moh In also has a traditional medicine remedy for kidney disease. Some patients who were told by modern medicine doctors that they have to go in for dialysis were cured of their kidney disease after taking Moh In's treatment, and no longer had to go in for dialysis.

For migraines, some patients suffered from them ever since they were teenagers up until they were middle aged and were never cured, but when they went to Moh In, after they took his infusion and finished drinking just two pots full, they were cured and the migraines never came back. The infusion has only three herbal ingredients: spiderflower (*Cleomaviscosa* Linn.), hoary basil (*Ocimumcitriodorum*), and heartwood of *Senna siamea*Lam.

For emphysema, chronic pulmonary disorder and asthma, garden spurge (*Euphorbia hirta* L.) is boiled with frangipani flowers (*Plumeriasp.*) and the patients drink the infusion three times a day before meals. Moh In used this treatment on himself to treat asthma, and he has been cured for a long time.

Moh In also treats many other diseases, including other NCDs, paralysis, AIDS, bone fractures, herpes, herniated disks and heart disease. Most of them are treated with the herbal remedies he learned from his ancestors. Only some diseases require prayers and incantations. Some diseases can also be cured with incantations only and no herbal remedy. Moh In's knowledge of traditional medicine should be studied and recorded for the benefit of health care.

Table 1
The diagnosis of the patients in the sample of 50 cases

Diagnosis	Case (n = 50)	%
Cancer	14	28.0
Migraine	8	16.0
Psoriasis	6	12.0
Diabetes Mellitus	6	12.0
Nephritis	5	10.0
Cardiac problem	4	8.0
Hypertension	4	8.0
Obesity	3	6.0

CONCLUSION

Indigenous health care knowledge and practices from others because of their interconnected nature. It can be contrasted with the medical knowledge and practices that arose in Europe over the last two hundred years or so and in recent times of speed on over the world in the form of modern, western, scientific medicine. In Thailand exiting indigenous knowledge evolved as a result of hundreds of years of experience and adapted to local social and environmental conditions.

Modern medicine has had a considerable impact across the world the last few decades, and has led to many rapid changes including health care benefits; but because of modern medicine's different philosophical basis, it has also lead to much social dislocation and little success in solving mental disorders. We see that modern medicine has been shaped by "mechanical" scientific thinking, in which the body is seen to function like a machine, distinct from the mind. The job of the doctor is to fix the broken machine by focusing on the parts that have problems. In contrast, most traditional indigenous medical theories are more holistic and see all parts of the body, the mind and even the spirit as being interconnected. Moreover, humans are considered to be closely connected with their environments. Evidence of such a way of thinking can often be found in the rural areas where the modernization process has had less effect and people suffer fewer psychological problems.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author would like to thank the Research and Development Institute, SuanSunandhaRajabhat University, Bangkok, Thailand for all supports.

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