CULTURAL MEANINGS OF CHILDHOOD DISEASE AND IMMUNIZATION: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY OF EDE ETHNIC MINORITY MOTHERS IN DAK LAK PROVINCE, VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT

Childhood immunization is one of the most successful health programs for significantly reducing child morbidity and mortality worldwide. However, immunization coverage rates are low in ethnic minority groups in the developing countries or the poorest counties. This study aims to understand an insider’s point of view of cultural meanings of childhood disease and immunization of Ede mothers relating to the low rates of vaccination. The Ede is the largest local ethnic minority group in Dak Lak province with the annual low vaccination coverage rates. The study also intends to find out reasons why such realities exist in the Ede community towards mothers’ non-acceptance of vaccination.

An ethnographic research during July-September 2012 in Buon Don district was carried out to understand Ede mothers’ non-acceptance of vaccination based on anthropological lens. Data were collected by using various methods including in-depth interviews, key informant interviews, focus group discussion, and participant observation.

The study results revealed that: (1) The meanings of childhood disease and immunization in the Ede mothers; (2) Mothers’ acceptance and non-acceptance of childhood immunization; and (3) Such meanings and other contextual factors affecting mothers’ acceptance of vaccination.

It is suggested that media of immunization, health education for parents, and health care service are needed to be promoted and developed in the Ede community. It is recommended that further research with the same format and design is needed to be conducted in different contexts to compare the results and find out the additional cultural meanings of childhood disease and immunization.

KEYS WORDS: CHILDHOOD DISEASE / IMMUNIZATION / VACCINATION / CULTURAL MEANING / EDE ETHNIC MINORITY GROUP

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