WOMEN’S BODIES AND THEIR WORRIES: “UTERUS PROBLEM” AMONG RURAL WOMEN IN CHIN STATE, MYANMAR

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ABSTRACT

Chin State is one of the poorest and most remote states in Myanmar. The aim of the study was to explain the understanding of women’s illness experiences of uterus problems, health seeking patterns related to uterus complaints, and social and economic factors influencing choices of treatment and care for their uterus problems. The ethnographic study consisted mainly of secondary sources, elderly oral history interviews, 1 key-informant interview, in-depth interviews with 8 women, 2 focus group discussions with 10 women, and body mapping with 8 women.

The symptoms they reported included backache, painful intercourse, burning upon urination, white discharge, headache, bad odor, itching, and numbness of the thighs, the fingers and the shoulder. The most commonly perceived causes of uterus problems were due to heavy loads, but there were also a lot of different conceptions. Almost never were they consulted at hospital because they did not have access to hospital health care services at affordable costs. There were three stages of health seeking patterns. Older women who had suffered for years did self care practices and went to a traditional healer to make sure for most types of uterus problems. Younger and single women first sought advice and consulted the healer. The duration of injections took a shorter time than for old women. Women who only suffered from a prolapsed uterus could get recovery from a midwife along with rest and self care practices, too. They almost always relied on self-care practices and the folk healers.

Therefore, the researcher strongly recommends setting up gynecological health care service centers in rural areas by combining them with an indigenous knowledge and healing process, counseling for prevention and management of uterus problems by health workers along with traditional healers for family planning, and providing integrated development programs such as a maternal and child health program, a family planning program, an income generating program, and an education and training program.

KEY WORDS: UTERUS/ BELIEF/ CAUSATION/ SYMPTOMS/ HEALTH SEEKING PATTERN/ SOCIAL ECONOMIC FACTORS

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