Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM), particularly Thai Traditional Massage therapy, as a cheaper, safer and more effective means of improving the health of sick people in Thailand; given that Thailand’s new health system places heavier demands on the economy. The study design is a cross-sectional, retrospective for the quantitative study, with interviews of selected patients and staff members for the qualitative study. The study sample comprises 327 patients who visited Thai Traditional Massage at Khokpho Hospital in Pattani Province from 1 January 2003 to 31 December 2003. Their total number of visits going back to October 1999 was 1319. The data are analyzed using chi-squared tests, analysis of variance, and multiple linear regression.

For the quantitative study: most patients are female (64.2%), with 24.5% aged 45-55 years and mostly Buddhist (86.5%) (13.5% Muslim compared with 50% in the local population). For occupation, 29.7% are government officers, only 4.9% pay cash for their treatment and 12.9% use a health (gold) card. Most patient visits (74.9%) are outpatient. The most common (28.7%) health problem is "worn out and full of aches and pains" (possibly arthritis), and most (90.9%) involve problems with the musculoskeletal system. Many (39.8%) visit only once, but one brain-damaged patient...
had frequent visits (100 visits in a year). Total cost is associated with age group and occupation. The older the patient the more services were used, resulting in a higher total cost. Housewives had a higher total cost than any of the other occupational groups. For qualitative study, there are five reasons why patients visit the Thai Traditional Massage (1) they can use their card; (2) the masseurs are experienced; (3) their symptoms are relieved; (4) convenience of travel; and (5) for information.