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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THAI HERBAL TRADITIONAL RECIPES FOR TREATMENT IN COMMUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this study were threefold: 1) to investigate the potentiality of using herbs for healthcare in the communities in Loei Province; 2) to compile the local herbal medicine recipes for healthcare in the communities in Loei Province; and, 3) to develop the local herbal medicine recipes for healthcare in the communities for further implementation and application. Mixed-method research (Research and Development) was used in this study, incorporating the action research which covered participatory action learning, in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and focus group discussions. The population of the study included the registered traditional healers who were still giving treatment to patients in 14 districts of Loei Province; current and previous patients who formerly received treatments from the traditional healers; community leaders; community elders; and, scholars of traditional Thai medicine. The findings are as following.

1. The study of the potentiality of using herbs for healthcare in the communities in Loei Province showed that 566 types of medicinal herbs were used to treat diseases.

2. The compilation of the local herbal medicine recipes for healthcare in the communities in Loei Province from all of the traditional doctors yielded 351 formulas.

3. The results of the development of the local herbal medicine recipes for healthcare in the communities for further implementation and application showed that the traditional healers collaborated to create 344 formulas as shown below. (1) Digestive system diseases: 51 formulas; (2) Respiratory diseases: 55 recipes; (3) Muscle and tendon disorders: 56 formulas; (4) Blood circulation diseases: 17 recipes; (5) Nervous system diseases: 14 formulas; (6) Skin diseases: 35 recipes; (7) Toxic exposures: 14 formulas; (8) Body fluid osmolality and tonicity; stomachic and digestive tonic: 12 formulas; (9) Urinary system and reproductive organs: 26 formulas; (10) Endocrine diseases (diabetes): 11 formulas; (11) Other systems; flu; cancers: 53 formulas.

The developed local herbal medicine recipes were distributed to the Loei Province Traditional Healer Club which is comprised of traditional healers who are experts in diagnosis and treatment registered as a TTM practitioner, holder of a Certificate of Traditional Thai Medicine, or specializes in Thai traditional pharmacy or Thai traditional medicine. The trial of the local herbal medicine recipes was conducted with the patients coming for treatment during October and December 2011. These local herbal medicine recipes included: diabetes treatment formulas; paralysis and tendon treatment formulas; gastritis treatment formulas; enteritis treatment formulas; hemorrhoid treatment formulas; reproductive system disease treatment formulas; and, cancer treatment formulas.

The results of the trial treatment of the patients treated by traditional healers revealed that they were satisfactory, meeting the expectations of all of the patients who received the treatments. All of the patients showed recovery conditions. Some showed that the illnesses were completely cured. However, all patients could return to live their normal lives. They could resume their professions in their usual manner. As a result, it can be assumed that the developed local herbal medicine recipes can be effectively used to treat patients in the communities.

KEYWORDS

Thai herbal, recipes for treatment.

RATIONAL

Presently, modern medicine has become the mainstream of large societies around the world while traditional medicine, such as herbal treatments, midwifery, osteopathy, etc., which also exists in societies, is being neglected as a result of the aforementioned social trends. Nevertheless, although modern medicine offers advancements in technology, it cannot fulfill personal, psychosocial satisfaction. Additionally, it is not completely accessible in remote areas (Chusak Suwimolsathien, 1994). The problems of modern healthcare are obvious. Currently, it has been accepted that the methods of modern medicine alone are not sufficient to solve all health problems since they have become increasingly expensive because the majority of the medicines and medical equipment must be imported from foreign countries. Therefore, modern medicine has its limits in terms of self-reliance and local accessibility. As a result, the services cannot be offered to various groups of people in the countryside. Moreover, modern medicine produces results that are in contrast with the self-sufficiency policy.

Herbal treatment is a Thai traditional medicine which is part of Thai wisdom which has been passed down through the generations since ancient times. Recently, however, new methods of medical treatment, which are based on scientific principles, have become popular. Consequently, the use of herbs is fading from Thai society, especially in big cities. Herbal treatment is now practiced mostly upcountry. However, during the current period of alternative medicine many people who are interested in healthcare have returned to the use of herbs. Even so, the wide acceptance of the development of Thai herbs and Thai herbal medicine recipes is a not simple endeavor. It is a difficult mission which requires the cooperation of every involved sector on the basic principles of research and development with a strong emphasis on the importance of the research and development of various Thai herbal medicine recipes for Thai people.

Thailand is an abundant country with many of herbs. Thai people have believed in and have had faith in the use of herbs to heal diseases and the treatment by traditional doctors for a long time on the basis of their local life, together with the cultural, social and economic systems that are agreeable and accepted within the communities. According to studies about traditional doctors, there are still many of them who have wisdom regarding the use of herbs, which plays an important role in treating diseases in local areas. The major problem of the local traditional doctors is the lack of application of actual knowledge and wisdom regarding the use of herbs. In addition, the use of technology to develop and distribute the knowledge properly is still limited. These problems can be solved if the knowledge about the use of herbs is collected and recorded in order that the medicine recipes can be utilized immediately. This will help to promote the use of herbal medicines as a substitute for chemical medicines which must be imported from foreign countries, which will result in a huge reduction in the cost of our country's public health services.

The promotion of the use of herbs for healthcare is very necessary. However, there is a problem regarding the loss of knowledge because in each local area there is no record or collection method of the herbal medicine recipes. This is the reason why the researchers, together with local authorities, have a strong desire to study the use of herbs for healthcare as well as collect and develop herbal medicine recipes in the communities. The results of the study will provide an approach for the application of the knowledge in healthcare and the understanding of beliefs about the use of herbs that can be applied to the appropriate healthcare procedures and recommendations of modern doctors, which will help to lessen the problem concerning mistaken beliefs regarding the use of herbs as mentioned earlier. Also, this research encourages the appreciation of the wisdom about the use of herbs with evidence that can be referred to, which will greatly benefit the preservation, promotion and encouragement of herbal medicine.

OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The objectives of this research are:

1. To investigate the potentiality of using herbs for healthcare in the communities in Thailand
2. To compile the local Thai herbal traditional recipes for healthcare in the communities in Thailand
3. To develop the local Thai herbal traditional recipes for healthcare in the communities for further implementation and application

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A herbal is a collection of descriptions of plants put together for medicinal purposes. (Singer, Charles 1923.) Expressed more elaborately it is a book containing the names and descriptions of plants, usually with information on their virtues (properties) (Arber, Agnes 1986) and in particular their medicinal, tonic, culinary, toxic, hallucinatory, aromatic, or magical powers, and the legends associated with them. A herbal may also classify the plants it describes, (Grieve, Maud 1984) may give recipes for herbal extracts, tinctures, or potions, and sometimes include mineral and animal medicaments in addition to those obtained from plants. Herbals were often illustrated to assist plant identification. (Anderson, Frank, 2001)

Herbalism is the study and use of medicinal properties of plants and plant extracts. Herbalism is also known as botanical medicine, medical herbalism, herbal medicine, herbology, herblore, and phytotherapy. The scope of herbal medicine is sometimes extended to include fungal and bee products, as well as minerals, shells and certain animal parts. (Acharya, Deepak and Shrivastava Anshu, 2008) Pharmacognosy is the study of medicines derived from natural sources.

Traditional use of medicines is recognized as a way to learn about potential future medicines. In 2001, researchers identified 122 compounds used in mainstream medicine which were derived from "ethno medical" plant sources; 80% of these have had an ethno medical use identical or related to the current use of the active elements of the plant.

(Fabricant DS, Farnsworth NR, 2001). Plants have evolved the ability to synthesize chemical compounds that help them defend against attack from a wide variety of predators such as insects, fungi and herbivorous mammals. By chance, some of these compounds, whilst being toxic to plant predators, turn out to have beneficial effects when used to treat human diseases. Such secondary metabolites are highly varied in structure, many are aromatic substances, most of which are phenols or their oxygen-substituted derivatives. (Lai PK, Roy J, 2004). At least 12,000 have been isolated so far; a number estimated to be less than 10% of the total. Chemical compounds in plants mediate their effects on the human body by binding to receptor molecules present in the body; such processes are identical to those already well understood for conventional drugs and as such herbal medicines do not differ greatly from conventional drugs in terms of how they work. This enables herbal medicines to be in principle just as effective as conventional medicines but also gives them the same potential to cause harmful side effects. Many of the herbs and spices used by humans to season food yield useful medicinal compounds. (Tapsell LC, Hemphill I, Cobiac L, et al., 2006).

THE METHODS OF THE RESEARCH

Mixed-method research (Research and Development) was used in this study, incorporating the action research which covered participatory action learning and using qualitative methods like in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and focus group discussions.

The details of the methods of the research are:

The population of the study includes the registered traditional doctors who were still giving treatment to patients in 14 districts of Loei Province; current and previous patients who formerly received treatments from the traditional doctors; community leaders; community elders; and scholars of traditional Thai medicine.

The tools used in data collection are qualitative methods, which comprised in-depth interviews regarding the potentiality of herbs in treating diseases.

The subjects of group conversation The participants were traditional doctors who would like to acquire the knowledge of the treatments by herbs. The main subject of the workshop was to brainstorm ideas about the development of herbal medicine recipes for healthcare in the communities in Loei Province. Also featured was the **patients' treatment record** which was used to record the patients' histories of illnesses, the anticipation towards the treatments by traditional doctors, the treatment methods and the results of the treatments by traditional doctors.

THE PROCEDURE OF THE RESEARCH

In this study, the researchers followed the steps of the research and development (R&D) as follows:

Step 1 The study of the potentiality of using herbs for healthcare in the communities

The researchers studied the potentiality of using herbs for healthcare in the communities, the medical properties of herbs and the efficiency of the treatment using the following methods:

- 1) The study of related research documents
- 2) The in-depth interviews with traditional doctors, patients who received treatments from the traditional doctors, community leaders, community elders, scholars of traditional Thai medicine and related sectors regarding the medical properties of herbs and the efficiency of the treatment
- 3) The group conversation between 10 traditional doctors to acquire the knowledge of the treatments by herbs

Step 2 The compilation of the local Thai herbal traditional recipes

This step featured in-depth interviews with herbal doctors to compile local herbal medicine recipes for healthcare in the communities. The received data was analyzed, categorized and put into records.

Step 3 The development of the local Thai herbal traditional recipes

In this step, the researchers organized a workshop for traditional doctors to brainstorm ideas concerning the development of herbal medicine recipes for healthcare in the communities, which was still inadequate, in order to make it easier to understand because it had never previously been done.

Step 4 The trial treatment by Thai herbal traditional recipes that have been developed

The developed local herbal medicine recipes were distributed to the Loei Province Traditional Healer Club so that the traditional doctors could use them in a trial treatment of patients in the communities.

DATA VERIFICATION AND ANALYSIS

The verification of qualitative data is done by the method of triangulation. The analysis of the data is qualitative analysis, by the method of content analysis.

THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY

1. The results of the study of the potentiality of using herbs for healthcare in the communities in Loei Province

According to the results of the study of the potentiality of using herbs for treating diseases by the traditional doctors, it was found that these traditional doctors gained their experience regarding the use of herbal medicines from palm textbooks, religious textbooks and Lanna textbooks. They also learned from other traditional doctors whose knowledge had been translated in Thai (local accent). Only the herbal treatments with high efficiency rates were compiled into recipes for treating symptoms of diseases in various body systems.

According to the in-depth interviews, the traditional doctors used 566 types of medicinal herbs to treat diseases.

2. The results of the compilation of the local Thai herbal traditional recipes for healthcare in the communities in Loei Province

In the compilation of the medicine recipes, categorizing them into formulas according to the symptoms of diseases in human body's systems, from the interviews with the traditional doctors, it was found that there were 351 medicine recipes as follow (1) Digestive system diseases: 58 formulas; (2) Respiratory diseases: 57 formulas; (3) Muscle and tendon disorders: 57 formulas; (4) Blood circulation diseases: 17 formulas; (5) Nervous system diseases: 16 formulas; (6) Skin diseases: 34 formulas; (7) Toxic exposures: 15 formulas; (8) Body fluid osmolality and tonicity; stomachic and digestive tonic: 12 formulas; (9) Urinary system and reproductive organs: 24 formulas; (10) Endocrine diseases (diabetes): 11 formulas and (11) Other systems; flu; cancers: 50 formulas.

3. The results of the development of the local Thai herbal traditional recipes for healthcare in the communities for further implementation and application

During the workshop, the traditional doctors collaborated to develop herbal medicine recipes by synchronizing the original recipes of each traditional doctor and then integrating them into new medicine recipes. In the process, the herbal ingredients, the mixing methods, the procedures and the detailed usages were well described so that people in general could understand and utilize them. To summarize, the traditional doctors developed 344 herbal medicine recipes in total, i.e. (1) Digestive system diseases: 51 formulas; (2) Respiratory diseases: 55 formulas; (3) Muscle and tendon disorders: 56 formulas; (4) Blood circulation diseases: 17 formulas; (5) Nervous system diseases: 14 formulas; (6) Skin diseases: 35 formulas; (7) Toxic exposures: 14 formulas; (8) Body fluid osmolality and tonicity; stomachic and digestive tonic: 12 formulas; (9) Urinary system and reproductive organs: 26 formulas; (10) Endocrine diseases (diabetes): 11 formulas; (11) Other systems; flu; cancers: 53 formulas.

The developed local Thai herbal traditional recipes were distributed to the Loei Province Traditional Healer Club which is comprised of traditional doctors who are experts in diagnosis and treatment registered as a TTM practitioner, holder of a Certificate of Traditional Thai Medicine, or specializes in Thai traditional pharmacy or Thai traditional medicine. The trial of the local herbal medicine recipes that the traditional doctors collaborated to develop was conducted with patients in the communities who came for treatment.

These local Thai herbal traditional recipes included: diabetes treatment formulas; paralysis and tendon treatment formulas; gastritis treatment formulas; enteritis treatment formulas; hemorrhoid treatment formulas; reproductive system disease treatment formulas; and, cancer treatment formulas.

It can be concluded that all of the patients were satisfied with the results of the treatment even though we were unable to contact some of them because, for various reasons, they could not show up on the appointed dates. All patients recovered from their illnesses. Some displayed that the illnesses were completely cured. All patients could return to their normal lives and resume their professions in their usual manner.

Therefore, the results of the trial treatment of the patients by traditional doctors using the developed herbal medicine recipes revealed that they were satisfactory, meeting or exceeding the expectations of all of the patients who received the treatments. As a result, it can be assumed that the developed local herbal medicine recipes can be effectively used to treat patients in the communities.

DISCUSSIONS OF THE RESULTS

The discussions of the results are in the following order:

1. The results of the study of the potentiality of using herbs for healthcare in the communities in Loei Province

According to the results of the study of the potentiality of using herbs, it was found that there was a great variety of herbs in Loei Province: there were as many as 566 types of them. The traditional doctors discovered their properties from observations and experiments regarding their usage based on the communities' cultural way of life. Apart from using herbs for healing illnesses, the treatments by the traditional doctors also included rites that were based on the local cultural foundation and religious beliefs of the communities. This finding is in accordance with the research by Opart Chamarat (2002). which indicated that traditional doctors were villagers in the communities who offered treatment for illnesses using traditional medical knowledge that had been inherited from ancestors and local resources. Their treatment was a mixture of the culture and beliefs of the villagers and traditional doctors together with the traditional medical system. It was, therefore, part of the local culture that had been developed under the influence of various specific factors.

In terms of illness treatments, it was discovered that the traditional doctors had different levels of experience and expertise in treating diseases. However, they looked for knowledge and sought new experiences to cure different diseases. The traditional doctors were equipped with the knowledge and expertise in treating patients using herbs which was accepted by the people in the communities or local societies. They relied on the traditional medical knowledge that had been inherited from their predecessors and local resources. Some resources, however, had to be obtained from other regions. The treatment was also combined with the culture and beliefs of the villagers.

The results of the study, exploration and interviews about the names of herbs in Loei Province, revealed that they could be categorized by the names, properties, and parts that were used for medicine recipes as well as the characteristics of the herbs in 3 categories, i.e., 1) categorization by utilization in different systems of the human body. For example, digestive system, respiratory system, nervous system (brain), urinary system, skin system, internal organ system, muscle and tendon system, blood circulation system, reproductive system, etc. 2) Categorization by the taste of the herbs. For example, astringent, sweet, abashed, bitter, oily, spicy, cool, sour and salty tastes 3) Categorization by characteristics of the herbs. For example, characteristics of the trunk, color, smell and the name of the herbs. Also, the herbs could be categorized by their properties in healing diseases. For example, temperature, fever, cold, women's diseases, vaginal discharge, leucorrhea, venereal disease, AIDS, toothache, hepatic disease, kidney disease, urinary stone disease, intoxication, Brugada syndrome, amebic liver abscess, cancer, herpes zoster, eczema, hemorrhoid, peptic ulcer, bowel disease, wasting disease, diarrhea, bloating, skin diseases, asthma, paresis, paralysis, animal poisons, diabetes, etc. This categorization is in accordance with the research by Rungrat Luangnathee (1997) which divided herbs into 4 categories, i.e., 1) Categorization by the manner of usage, which was also subdivided into 2 groups: for internal and external usage 2) Categorization by the effectiveness of the herbs in different systems of the human body, which were the digestive system, respiratory system, urinary and reproductive systems, skin system and other symptoms like malaria, pain, inflammation caused by infection, etc. 3) Categorization by properties of the herbs into 14 categories, which were antidiarrheals, laxative, anti-flatulence, stomach medicines, anticoccidial drugs, anthelmintics, cough syrup, diuretic, wind disease drugs, cardiogenic, tooth painkiller, skin disease drugs, head lice medication, antidotes for insect bites and 4) Categorization by the parts of the herbs that were used to make medicine, which were root, bark, wood, leaf, flower, fruit and seed. The categorization is also in accordance with the research by Pennapa Sapcharoen and team (1998) regarding the use of traditional herbs by hill tribes: Case Study: The Meo hill tribe in the North of Thailand, which was a survey and qualitative research conducted by interviewing Meo traditional doctors to learn about the concept of disease explanation and the use of herbs for treating patients. The areas of the study were in 3 locations: 1) Baan Huay Phung Mai, Moo 2, Mae Tho Sub-district, Mae La Noi District, Mae Hong Son Province; 2) Baan Huay Krai, Moo 7, Wieng Sub-district, Wieng Pa District, Chiang Rai Province and 3) Baan Pha Poo Jom, Moo 6, Kudchang Sub-district, Mae Taeng District, Chiang Mai Province. According to the results of the study, the concept of disease explanation of the traditional doctors could be divided in accordance with the hypotheses of the causes of the diseases into 2 main categories, which were; diseases that were caused by supernatural power and diseases that were caused by natural power. Regarding the exploration of herbs, it was found that there were 142 types in 78 different families. The most commonly used herbs belonged in the EUPHORBACEAE family, followed by the ZINGIBERACEAE COMPOSITAE family and the CUCURBITACEAE RUTACEAE family respectively. Others were found in small quantities.

2. The results of the compilation of the local herbal medicine recipes for healthcare in the communities in Loei Province

In the compilation of herbal medicine recipes by categorizing them into formulas according to the symptoms of the diseases in the human body's systems together with the methods for usage from the interviews with the traditional doctors, it was found that there were 351 medicine recipes. This finding is in accordance with the ideas of Sombat Prapawicha and team (1999) which categorized them according to the body systems, which were digestive system, respiratory system, nervous system (brain), urinary system, internal organ system, muscular system, blood circulation system (blood, wind), reproductive system, skeletal system, fever, children's diseases and poisonous animals. Apart from the experience and expertise in treating diseases that were categorized by body systems, it was also discovered that the traditional doctors had experience and expertise in treating various diseases and symptoms which were temperature, fever, cold, women's diseases, vaginal discharge, leucorrhea, venereal disease, AIDS, toothache, hepatic disease, kidney disease, urinary stone disease, intoxication, brugada syndrome, amebic liver abscess, cancer, herpes zoster, eczema, hemorrhoid, peptic ulcer, bowel disease, wasting disease, diarrhea, bloating, skin diseases, asthma, paresis, paralysis, animal poisons, diabetes, etc.

3. The results of the development of the local herbal medicine recipes for healthcare in the communities for further implementation and application

The traditional doctors collaborated to develop a total of 344 medicine recipes. The developed local herbal medicine recipes were distributed to Loei Province Traditional Healer Club so that the traditional doctors could use them in a trial treatment for patients in the communities. The results of the trial treatment revealed that the patients were satisfied, and that the illnesses were cured. These results are in accordance with the research by Prasuriya Martkam who studied the treatment of traditional doctors and which found that the patients came to receive treatments for 1. Women's diseases, vaginal discharge; 2. Hemorrhoids; 3. Venereal disease, AIDS; 4. Peptic ulcers and bowel diseases; 5. Hepatic disease; 6. Skeletal diseases; 7. Kidney stones 8. Breast cancer; 9. Brugada syndrome; 10. Paresis and paralysis; 11. Kidney disease 12. Eczema, muscular and tendon pain. Those patients were advised by family members or ill relatives to seek help from traditional doctors who offered physical and mental support. After they had been unsuccessfully treated in many different places, the last refuge was traditional doctors.

It can be concluded that the results of the trial treatment of the patients by traditional doctors using the developed medicine recipes revealed that they were satisfactory, meeting or exceeding the expectations of all of the patients who received the treatments. As a result, it can be assumed that the developed local herbal medicine recipes can be effectively used to treat patients in the communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS**1 Recommendation for further application of the results of the study**

(1) The results of the study demonstrated the benefits of using herbs for treating diseases in various systems. Therefore, an approach to encourage the use of herbs for healthcare should be established.

(2) The results of the study of the satisfaction of the patients and their relatives showed that the use of herbs was well accepted. Thus, related sectors should distribute the knowledge about the properties of herbs in treating diseases in order to encourage people to consider using herbs to heal diseases.

2. Recommendation for future research

(1) There should be a study to create learning innovations that encourage the use of herbs to treat diseases.

(2) There should be a further study concerning the pharmacological properties of the developed herbal medicine recipes.

(3) There should be a study concerning the contamination of microorganisms and bacteria in the developed local herbal medicine recipes in order to attain the data which will help to promote the making of drugs by sterile techniques.

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