

Research Article

Disclosure of Traditional and Complementary Medicine Use and Its Associated Factors to Medical Doctor in Primary Care Clinics in Kuching Division, Sarawak, Malaysia

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The decision by the patients to disclose traditional and complementary medicine (TCM) use to their doctor is an important area to be explored. This study aimed to determine the disclosure of TCM use and its associated factors to medical doctor among primary care clinic attendees in Kuching Division, Sarawak. It was a cross-sectional study using questionnaire, interviewer administered questionnaire. A total of 1130 patients were screened with 80.2% reporting using TCM. Logistic regression analysis revealed that being female (AOR = 3.219, 95% CI: 1.385, 7.481), perceived benefits that TCM can prevent complication of illness (AOR = 3.999, 95% CI: 1.850, 8.644) and that TCM is more gentle and safer (AOR = 4.537, 95% CI: 2.332, 8.828), perceived barriers of not having enough knowledge about TCM (AOR = 0.530, 95% CI: 0.309, 0.910), patient dissatisfaction towards healthcare providers being too business-like and impersonal (AOR = 0.365, 95% CI: 0.199, 0.669) and paying more for healthcare than one can afford (AOR = 0.413, 95% CI: 0.250, 0.680), and accessibility of doctors (AOR = 3.971, 95% CI: 2.245, 7.023) are the predictors of disclosure of TCM use. An open communication between patients and doctor is important to ensure safe implementation and integration of both TCM and medical treatment.

1. Introduction

The use of traditional and complementary medicine (TCM), a group of diverse medical and healthcare practices and products that are not considered part of conventional medicine, has increased in popularity within the world including Malaysia in the past decade [1–3]. Estimate of TCM use by Malaysian's adults range from 67.6% to 71.2% in their lifetime and 53.8% to 57.4% within the last period of 12 months of the study [3]. Traditional and complementary use globally including Malaysia is expected to continue to grow as global shifts occur in the focus on preventive medicine and individual control over healthcare options [1, 4].

Demand for TCM products, practices, and practitioners worldwide is substantially increasing and Malaysia is no exception. According to Health Informatics Centre, Ministry of Health Malaysia, there were approximately 11,691 TCM

practitioners all over Malaysia and this number approximately increased to 15,000 in the year 2011 [5]. Furthermore, TCM Division received RM 2,185,460.00 (US\$ 520,348) budget which is much higher than in 2006 and 2007 for operational and development expenditure and 90.75% of the budget was spent on management services such as payment to traditional and complementary medicine practitioners and acquisition of supplies for TCM integrated hospitals [6]. Moreover, out of pocket TCM expenditure is rapidly growing. It is estimated that Malaysia spends approximately US\$500 million annually on traditional therapies, compared to only US\$ 300 million on conventional therapies [7]. This increasing utilization of TCM especially in Malaysia may lead to a situation in which people are not only using TCM, but also substituting conventional medicine with TCM suggesting that it is important to understand why people choose to use TCM.