

## Health seeking behaviours of indigenous women in rural areas in the State of Sarawak, Malaysia

J. Buncuan<sup>1</sup>, J. Liau<sup>2</sup>, P. Zabidah<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Nursing, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, University Malaysia Sarawak.

<sup>2</sup>Department of Community Development, Faculty of Social Sciences, University Malaysia Sarawak

<sup>3</sup>School of Nursing, University of Nizwa, Oman  
\*jbuncuan@unimas.my

**Introduction:** Health seeking behavior is influenced by several factors such as those that are surrounding and affecting an individual such as cultural beliefs and practices, availability of health services and alternative health care providers as well as individual's experiences. In Malaysia, there are limited studies that focus on the health seeking behaviours amongst the rural communities. This paper is part of the findings of an ethnographic study focused on child rearing of a rural indigenous community.

**Method:** Focus group and in-depth interviews were conducted to explore the health seeking behaviours of indigenous women in five rural Bisaya villages in Limbang District in the State of Sarawak in Malaysia. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the collected data.

**Results:** The study showed that mothers in the rural areas used traditional medicine and practiced self-

prescription. These practices are more frequent where there is limited accessibility of health services. It is further intensified if immediate family member is a traditional healer. The younger generation of women, however, preferred modern medicine.

**Discussion:** There is likelihood that mothers in the rural areas seek other types of health seeking behaviour other than modern medicine. This finding is consistent with those from other countries.

**Conclusion:** These findings suggest that the health professional and significant others need to be aware of these practices and preferences of rural communities. Health professionals need to be aware of the cultural practices of rural communities. Continuous support from health professionals, family members and other agencies is necessary.

**Keywords:** childminders, childrearing, domestic helpers, focus group, rural communit