

Research Article

Patient's Decision to Disclose the Use of Traditional and Complementary Medicine to Medical Doctor: A Descriptive Phenomenology Study

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Nondisclosure of traditional and complementary medicine (T&CM) use may cause individual to be at risk of undue harm. This study aimed to explore patient's experience and views on their decision to disclose the use of T&CM to the doctor. An exploratory qualitative study using in-depth interview involving 10 primary care clinics attendees in Kuching was conducted. The results indicated that disclosure of T&CM use will motivate them to get information, increase doctor's awareness, and get support from family and friends for disclosure. Fear of negative relationship and negative response from doctors was a barrier for disclosure. Doctor's interpersonal and communication skills of being involved, treating patients respectfully, listening attentively, respecting privacy, and taking time for the patient were a critical component for disclosure. Intrapersonal trust regarding doctor influences their satisfaction on healthcare. Women are more open and receptive to a health concern and expressing negative emotions and tend to share problems, whereas men always described themselves as healthy, tended to keep their own personal feeling to themselves, and tended to not share. The doctor should consider gender differences in disclosure, their attitude towards T&CM use, and gained patient's trust in the delivery of healthcare services. Good interpersonal and communication skills must be maintained between doctor and patients.

1. Introduction

Ensuring safety, efficacy, and quality of traditional and complementary medicine (T&CM) products is a core objective of World Health Organization (WHO) towards recognizing the role of T&CM in modern healthcare system [1]. However, a major issue of importance involving the coordination of T&CM and conventional medicine is whether or not T&CM users disclose their use of T&CM to their healthcare providers and the nondisclosure of use of T&CM may cause individual at risk of undue harm [2, 3].

The review of the existing literature on T&CM disclosure estimates was relatively low globally (between 7.6% and 48.2%) and Malaysian studies showed almost similar scenario in which the nondisclosure rate was as low as 25% and as high as 90.4% [4–10]. Hence, this lack of discussion may indicate a deficiency in patient-conventional healthcare professional

relations and could have a negative impact on patient care and outcome [11]. In particular, traditional and complementary medicine is thought by many people to be natural and safe to use, without adverse effects. Most people use traditional and complementary medicine in addition to conventional medicine.

In Malaysia, particularly in multiethnic-multicultural areas like Sarawak, though many studies have investigated the determinants of T&CM use as well as the decision to disclose the T&CM use, few have explored in depth the factors that determine the disclosure of T&CM use to the medical doctor. In continuation of our quantitative studies on the determinant of T&CM disclosure, this qualitative study was conducted in order to explore participants' views in more depth and provide additional insight [10]. Thus, this study aimed to explore the experience and views of primary care clinic attendees in Kuching Division, Sarawak, in relation to