



# A Development of Healthy Promotion Model by E-SAN Folk Healer's Wisdom

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## ABSTRACT

The purposes of research were 1) to study the knowledge used by local folk healers, the condition of healing and services, the acceptance of the methods used by the folk healers in Loei Province, and 2) to develop the model for the promotion of the community health with the herbal wisdom of I-san folk healer participated by the related stakeholders. Mixed methods of quantitative and qualitative research were applied, the quantitative research was used in the survey, and the quantitative research was used in an in-depth interview, the participatory observation, and focus group discussion. The target groups in this study consisted of the registered folk healers from 14 districts of Loei who still perform the healing, the local people who get the services or used to get the services from the folk healers, the senior people in the areas, and Thai traditional medicine scholars. The findings were as follows. All folk healers treat the illness according to the systems of human body. The healing condition in which the folk healers used was related to the belief of local culture that the folk healers believe, including (1) the belief in the causes of illness, (2) 4 elements and 5 aggregates of life, (3) astrological belief on fate, (4) astrological belief on the causes of illness, (5) the belief on the 4 elements of life, (6) the belief in the rite of Thai traditional medicine, (7) the belief and the rite on the herbs, and (8) the belief on the village herbs and the elimination of illness.

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## Introduction

Nowadays it is accepted that only the modern medicine cannot solve all the health problems because the medical system is expensive, and it depends on the medical supplies and appliances from other countries, and these resulted the medical services to be limited especially to those who reside in the remote area. So what should be considered are to pay attention to the study of local wisdom in taking care of health by the folk healing in all dimensions and to bring out what is still currently suitable for the community to use in the real situation. The attitude of the villagers to the medical system shows that the modern medicine and the folk healing are not separated, they are dependent on each others. That is why the development of public health should focus on both the modern medicine and the folk healing and then let the people choose the appropriate way in curing illnesses for themselves. (Darane Onnchomchan, 1994)

It was found that however the bodies of knowledge on the local wisdom mostly were the skills and experiences gained by the folk healer himself, and were not written in the form of any book. For the folk healers who collected the wisdom in the form of books, it was found that those books were old and risky to be damaged and some were already damaged. Most of the folk healers did not have the students or someone who inherit their knowledge. This current situation indicated that the inheriting of folk healers' knowledge was to be concerned. (Darane Onnchomchan, 1994)

The local wisdom of the folk healer in curing and taking care of the people in the community was the traditional style using the understanding of health holistically the body, the mind,

and society. The use of local wisdom in healing was necessary especially for the people in the lower class, more than a half of the people residing in the country. These people believed in the traditional healing. For the conscious mind in the conservation and keeping on the cultural knowledge, and for the community to have well balancing health in the body, the mind, the society, and the culture, the cultural eating habit such as having vegetables as the folk medicine was blending well in the ways of lives as seen in the ancient I-saan statement: "Rice as a main food, should the vegetables as healing drug". This cultural dimension showed the behaviors in protecting and promoting self health sustainably following the sufficient economic principle, and also it was the activation for the warning of the community not to be so capitalism and consumerism, and not to forget the local wisdom inherited from the ancestors. It was not too late if the communities return to study and accept the local wisdom with the adaptation of technology for the development of body of knowledge and holistic-health wisdom, the wisely healing method which was agreeable with the society and local culture.

The folk healing was the cultural system in curing and taking care of health which was studied on the basis of the experiences, traditional belief, and the religious teachings with the uniqueness of each local area and the evolution in each area. The folk healing in Loei featured the characteristics which were the blending of traditional beliefs on various kinds of spirits, the beliefs on religion about hell, heaven, and karma, and the culture that were parts in taking care of health when being sick or being normal including the controlling of society.

The folk healers in the community had an important role in taking care of the people. The healing process started with the providing of the paying-respect tray consisted of flowers, incenses, candles, and money as a wishing fee by the patient, and then the folk healer started the process of healing by identifying and diagnosing the sickness and in the diagnosis the folk healer did not look only the symptom but also look at the relationship of the body, the mind, and the society of the patient, and after that, the folk healer would start the method of health protection and the prevention of sickness; the healing ritual focusing on the curing the mind together with curing the illness in the body. The method may include physical therapy, herbal therapy, and/or food therapy depending on the case. Sometimes, though the illness was disappeared, the restoration of mind needed to be done for the full functioning of the body. The massages were given to relieve the pain, and sometimes herbal intakes were needed to help relieve the pain. However, the taking care of health was related as whole methods, they cannot be separated.

In Loei province, the people have been believed in folk healing method, and being faithful with this kind of curing for a very long time, it was related to the ways of life of the countryside people, the culture, the society and the economy that was corresponded to the community. For the inheriting of the folk healing wisdom, it was the state policy through the ministry by the academic people and policy planner. The traditional medicine depended on the good principle such as having the Act on the controlling of medical arts resulting the traditional medicine to be limited. The folk healer had to study from the central traditional medical school. For the local folk healers in the countryside, mostly, they are old people who have experiences and know how to use herbs for curing by observing, studying, and testing with long experiences before getting the results of the herbal use, but these folk healers do not have medical art certificates, and this make them illegal to cure other people. Additionally, the curing method was not recorded as texts for the younger generations to study and then use the knowledge to heal people. For the traditional medical healers who studied at the central school for traditional medicine, they had traditional medical art certificates, but they did not have experiences and the knowledge that they gained was not related to the local community. They studied theories from texts, but they could not use the knowledge in the real context of local communities. These were the main problems of local traditional healers according to the lacking of herbal wisdom to apply in the real situation, and the limitation of technology for the development of body of knowledge and the proper inheriting. Such problems could be mended by collecting the body of knowledge on herbal usages and record them as a ready for use manual, this helps promoting the use of herbs instead of using the greatest amount of imported chemicals and drugs from foreign countries. It also helps lowering the budget for the national health services. From the study, it was found that the folk healers can be classified into 4 groups: the ritual groups (healing the mind), the physical method groups (physical therapy), the herbal groups (healing with herbs, and the food therapy group (healing by food). From the survey, it was found that most of the folk healers in north eastern were the groups that use herbs.

It was considered that the body of knowledge on the folk healing in taking care of community health was important to be studied, carried out the research to get the true and the right

body of knowledge under the academic process with the integration on the conditions that found and maintained currently in the community. As mentioned above, the researcher was interested in the studying and developing of the pattern in promoting community health with the folk healing wisdom in north eastern Thailand, and the result revealed the condition of the folk healers in north eastern Thailand, the body of knowledge used by the folk healers, the condition on the healing methods and services of the folk healers, and the acceptance of the healing methods of the folk healers. The results of the study can be used as guidelines for the promotion of the use of folk healing as the source to rely on and as the health promotion for the people in the community. It was also the guideline for the community to rely on itself in taking care of health and also the promotion for the community to concern about the local wisdom of north eastern Thailand which was the advantage in conserving, promoting, and supporting the local wisdom usage in the wider society and so on.

#### **Research Objectives**

1. To study the body of knowledge used by the folk healers, the condition of healing and giving services of the folk healers, and the acceptance of the folk healing methods in Loei
2. To develop the model of promoting community health with the local wisdom of the folk healers on the herbs by the participation of the related groups

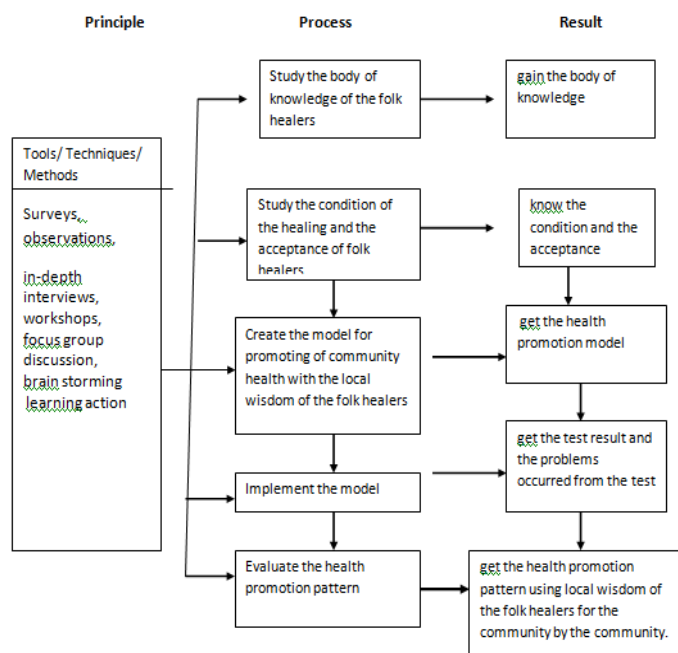
#### **Expected outcome**

1. Expected outcome
  - 1) Know the body of knowledge used in taking care of health by the folk healers including methods, process, and steps in curing illness by the folk healers, and know the acceptance of folk healing by the folk healers.
  - 2) Know the result of the healing methods used by the folk healers in Loei from the patients' perspective that can be used as the foundation for the development of book of alternative medicine.
  - 3) Get the model of promoting community health with the local wisdom on herbs of the folk healers.
  - 4) Bring the body of knowledge on curing illness by the folk healers gained from the research into the local curriculum to use in the study of students and higher students on traditional Thai medicine as well as distribute the knowledge to the young adults and interested people.
2. Target groups to receive the advantages
  - 1) Direct advantages receivers include people and patients who have illness can use the body of knowledge of the folk healers to take care of themselves and cure an illness.
  - 2) Related groups, include physician and nurse, they can use traditional Thai medicine together with the modern medicine to cure the patients.
  - 3) Groups of related study field can use the results from the research in the study courses of traditional Thai medicine and can be distributed to young adults and interested people on the folk healing.

#### **Research Framework**

##### **Research Model**

The research model used in this study was Action Research with the Action Learning process used the mixed methodologies of both quantitative and qualitative research. The quantitative one was performed by surveying, and the qualitative one used in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and in-group discussion.



**Figure 1 Research Framework**

### Target group

The target groups of this study consisted of

1. The folk healers from 14 Districts of Loei Province, and the criterion for selection were folk healers who registered with provincial public health office and still operate the healing practice by the time of studying

2. The service receivers in the community or the people who got the services from the folk healers consisted of 20 selected people on the following criterion

- 1) The adults aged 32 years and above
- 2) People who got the jobs
- 3) People who got the services from the folk healers during the past three months
3. Members of the folk healers' family
4. Leaders or community leaders
5. Folk healers network
6. Related groups include Sub-district Administration Organization, schools, and the main organization which controls and take care of folk healers: Loei Public Health Office

### Process and Method in analyzing data

In this study, the researcher used Research and Development as follows

#### Stage 1 : Research

In this stage of studying, the researcher studied the body of knowledge used by the folk healers, the condition of healing, the services of the folk healers, the acceptance of folk healers, and the methods used by the folk healers in Loei. The processes were as follows:

1. Study the related research literatures
2. Study the target groups who can provide the important data in Loei. The groups consisted of groups of the folk healers, groups of the people who got the services from the healers, groups of community leaders and senior citizens in the area, groups of academic people in the Thai traditional medicine, and related organizations. The tools used in the study were in-depth interview forms, in-group discussion as the following details.

1) The process used in-depth interview on the topic of the body of knowledge the folk healers used, the condition of healing and the services of the folk healers, the acceptance, the healing methods of the folk healers in Loei province. The data was

collected by interviewing the folk healers, the patients, the community leaders, and senior citizens in the village.

2) The informal observation was used by means of social context, culture, belief, festival, aspect, and steps in healing illness with herbs.

3) In-group discussions were held 2 times using purposive sampling in Loei; the first time consisted of 10 folk healers from Loei to find out the approaches in taking care of health with the local wisdom on herbs of the folk healers, the second time consisted of 10 patients who got the healing services from the folk healers, the topic was on the result of the healing.

**Stage 2:** The development of model in promoting community health with the local wisdom of the folk healers used herbs.

This stage specified the topics gained from stage 1 and held the meeting for the anticipatory brainstorming. The target group consisted of the specialized folk healers who have been in the careers of folk healing for more than 10 years, the community leaders, and the related organizations include the Loei Public Health Office, the Division of Public Health and Environment of Loei Municipality, Community Development Office of Loei, Academic People on the culture, 30 people all together. The meeting was held in order to create the appropriate pattern in inheriting the body of knowledge in taking care of health of the folk healers, and the activities were as follows:

1. Create the community health promotion model with the local wisdom on herbs of the folk healers by holding the stage for the brainstorming, and the target group consisted of the specialized folk healers who have been in folk healing careers more than 10 years of services, academic people, and people from related organizations, 30 people all together, to create the appropriate model of community health promotion with the local wisdom on herbs of the folk healers.
2. Hold the meeting for the working team to specify the plans and activities related to the results gained from the brainstorming.
3. Bring the model created into practice by action learning process according to the plans of activities specified and the needs of the target group.
4. Evaluate the model for the community health promotion by interviewing and using the questionnaire.

### Research Tool

The research tools used in the study were

1. In-depth interview guideline The in-depth interview question used to interview the participant individually as specified below.

1) In-depth interview with the community leaders, the patients who got the services from the folk healers and relatives, the question was on the acceptance of the methods used by the folk healers in Loei.

2) In-depth interview with the folk healers on the body of knowledge they used, the condition of healing and the services provided by the folk healers, the acceptance of the methods of healing used by the folk healers in Loei.

2. Focus Group Discussion The group consisted of 8-10 people, each group given 2 hours for the discussion, and the researcher provided the guideline for the discussion for each group focusing on the model in taking care of health for the people in the community with the use of local wisdom on herbs of the folk healers.

3. Brainstorming to find the appropriate model for the promotion of community health with the use of local wisdom on herbs of the folk healers.

4. The questionnaire on the community activities of promoting community health.

#### **Tool Verification**

The researcher had a checkup on the data gained each day to see the completion of the data, and to see whether the data was enough or not, and the data was classified in topics according to the objectives of the study in order to provide the answer the research questions completely following the research framework and limitation of the study that the researcher intended to study. The data triangulation was used for the completion of the data and the objectives of the research as following.

1. Data Triangulation was used to verified the source of data including time, places, and people, and to verify whether the data was from the same source or not.
2. Methodological Triangulation was used to collect the data by participatory observing, interviewing, in-group discussion, and surveying.

#### **Data Analysis**

The data was analyzed with the quantitative and qualitative methods as followings.

1. Data gained from the survey and coded questionnaire was analyzed and recorded with the computer program using percentage, average, means, X and standard deviation.
2. Qualitative analysis was analyzed with content analysis. The researcher analyzed and collected the data at the same time. After gaining the data, it was recorded thoroughly and grouped into sections and types, and was analyzed according to concepts and theories for the conclusion and then presented the in the form of descriptive report.

#### **Results of the study**

1. The result from the study of general condition, the body of knowledge used by the folk healers in curing illnesses, the condition of the healing and the services provided by the folk healers, the acceptance, and the methods used by the folk healers in Loei.

#### **General Condition of the Folk Healers**

From the study of general condition of the folk healers registered with the Thai traditional medicine office, and still giving the services in healing, all the folk healers have different experiences and specialized in different health problems. It was found that there were 35 illnesses and can be classified into 11 groups of healings including 1) digestive system, 2) respiratory system, 3) Muscle and sinew system, 4) blood circulation system, 5) nerve system, 6) skin (integumentary) system, 7) Poisonous animal and residue, 8) maintain and nurture body balance and elixir, 9) Urinary and Reproduction system, 10) Endocrine diseases and diabetes, 11) Others such as cancers.

#### **The body of knowledge used for healing**

It was found that the folk healers have knowledge in using herbs and can classify the herbs according to the action effected to each body system such as classifying the parts of herbs: leaves, flowers, branches, tree, roots, and etc, and classifying the tastes of each herb: bitter, acidulous, sour, and etc.

#### **The condition on the healing of the folk healers**

The condition on the healing of the folk healers was related to the belief of the local culture in each area, and such beliefs include 1) superstition, 2) the causes of illness, 3) five human aspects, 4) astrology and hypothesis of illness reason, 5) four combination elements of life, 6) ritual of Thai traditional medicine, 7) belief and ritual of using herbs, and 8) the belief on village magic medicine and the expel of the illness ritual.

#### **The acceptance of the methods used by the folk healers**

The results gained from 15 purposive sampling who choose to use alternative healing methods indicated that mostly the patients had cured by the modern medicine but the symptom still did not get better, so they later came to get the healing from the folk healers and then the illness was disappeared. The patients were very satisfied with the healing methods of the folk healers. Some people returned to normal health condition, and all people can return to work and spend their daily life as normally as it was before.

2. Results from the development of community health promotion with the local wisdom on herbs of the folk healers with the related organizations

2.1 The results from the creation of the pattern for community health promotion can be grouped into 3 models; Model 1: Community Health Promotion, Model 2: The creation of media and textbooks on the local wisdom of the folk healers, and Model 3: The distribution of body of knowledge to public.

2.2 The results of bringing models into practice, for each pattern, the activities were operated as followings. Model 1: Community health promotion activity includes 1) holding the personal health activity for the students' study enhancement in school, 2) growing herb garden in school with the cooperation of village-temple-school, and 3) using herbs for healing illness in school instead of using modern medicine. Model 2: The creation of media and textbooks on the local wisdom activity includes 1) creating textbooks on herbs in Loei and the herbal usage manual of I-saan, 2) creating CD and computer assisted learning program on the local herbs and herbal usage manual of I-saan, and Model 3: The distribution of body of knowledge to public, the activity was the holding the folk healer caravan of the inheriting of local wisdom and the development of health protection pattern (model).

2.3 The results of bringing the models into practice, it was found that the participants were satisfied with the activities and the participants found that the activities were useful and can be applied in the health promotion.

#### **Discussion of the research result**

The result from the study on the body of knowledge on herbs that the folk healers use to heal the illness indicated that the folk healers were able to classify the herbs according to the action of the herbs towards the system of the human body, to classify the herbs according to the parts such as leaves, flowers, brunches, tree, roots, and etc., and to classify the herbs according to the tastes such as bitter, acidulous, our, and etc.

The healing methods of the folk healers were related to the cultural beliefs of the local. The beliefs of the folk healers include the superstition, the causes of illness, the five aspects of life, the astrology and the hypothesis on the causes of the illness, the four elements of human body, the beliefs on the ritual of Thai traditional medicine, the beliefs about the herbal rituals. Such beliefs were related to the body of knowledge of the folk healers. Lanna people believed that human body was made from 5 elements; earth, water, wind, fire, and air. This was correspond to what Daranee Onchomchan (2007:145) who said that the folk healers mostly have the beliefs on something related to the cultural system of the community that they dwell in and the beliefs on health and illness. The folk healers chose the methods of healing that were appropriate for the cases of illness for each patient. Additionally, they used several methods together with the application of ideas and the ways of healing which were related to the Indigenous Self-care focusing on the balance of

health relating to the social and natural rules. Such methods of healing were the view or dimensions of body, mind, soul, and emotion and took care of them to be concordant with the surrounding world. If human violated the natural rules, the life would be unbalanced, weak, and sick. This method of healing worked best with the Psychosomatic Disorders. For example, in the village society, there were groups of illnesses that the folk healers and patients believed that the causes of illnesses were supernatural things. Mostly, the illnesses were the illnesses that could not be differentiated between the body and the mind, and related to the ways of life of people and the folk healers in the village. The folk healers and the people had the same social and cultural foundation, the similar ways of life, and the beliefs on the causes of illness, and the methods and steps of healing were simple and could be understood easily. Importantly, family and relatives could come to join and see every step of healing, and the cost was not expensive. (Rungrangsi Wiboonchai, 1995:59) The result from this study was corresponded with the research of Chuleekorn Khuanchainon (1997:98) which concluded the remarkable feature of a Holistic system in diagnosis and healing the illness depending on the social and cultural context. This corresponded with the concept of Preecha Uitrkul, and et al (1998:Abstract), he studied Tai Korat in Nakornrachasima and Tai Lao in Chaiyaphum and found indifferently that the folk healers believed in the elements of life like the folk healers in other communities. They believed that the life consisted of the body; earth, water, wind, and fire, and the mind; the feeling and the soul. This showed that the cultural differences and the beliefs in each local area were related to the beliefs in taking care of health

The result of the study on the acceptance of the methods of folk healing in Loei province showed that the patients and the relatives were satisfied with the results of the healing, the illness was better or completely cured in some case. However every could return to use a daily life, work, doing business as before. And this corresponded with Phra Suriya Martkham (2009:122-130), he studied the development of the process in inheriting the local wisdom of the folk healers in Thailand and Laos People Democratic Republic, the work focused on the patients who got illness healing. From the study, it was found that the patients got better and were satisfied with the result, and the result of this study was corresponded with Patthira Phon-ngam (2011:451) which was on the development of the manual for using herbs in healing or curing the deceases and illnesses in the community, and there was a test on the use of the herb showing that the patients and the relatives were satisfied with the results of the healing.

The result of the development of the models in promoting the community health with the wisdom of the folk healers had yielded the three following models. Model 1: Community Health Promotion, the activities were 1) the providing of the Health Education concerning on the learning enhancement of the youth in school, 2) providing the herbal garden in school with the cooperation of the village, the temple, and the school, and 3) using the herbs as the first aid in school instead of chemical medicine. Model 2: The creation of learning materials on the local wisdom of the folk healers, the activities were 1) the creation of the book on herbs in Loei and the manual for the use of local herbs in I-saan, 2) the creation of CDs, computer assisted learning program on the herbs in Loei and the manual for the use of local herbs in I-saan, and Model 3: the distribution of the body of knowledge of the folk healers to the people, the

activity was the holding of the folk healers caravan for the inheriting of the local wisdom and the development of the pattern in taking care of health in the community. All of the patterns provided were from the brainstorming of all participated sections, the participants completely agreed with the ideas, and the conceptual ideas from the brainstorming was the efficient tool for the community development, and all the activities were brought into practice with the participatory action.

### **Suggestion**

#### **1. Suggestion for the research results application**

The study results provided the body of knowledge used by the folk healers, the condition of the healing and the services of the folk healers, the acceptance, the methods of healing of the folk healers in Loei province, and the results could be used as followings:

- 1) The promotion of the use of local wisdom of the folk healers for the general illness healing to take care of members of the family, relatives, and neighbors.
- 2) The state organizations should highly promote and support the use of the local wisdom of the folk healer for the state have been interested in the use of herbs more than 10 years, but the state did not completely have an intention to support the activities on the use of the herbs, or sometimes the supports were not corresponded to the local needs, especially, the culture because the such support brought the system of modern medicine without the adaptation for the Thai cultural appropriateness.
- 3) Folk healing related organizations should intentionally study the folk healing and bring it to apply or mix with the modern medicine, the state should truly support the folk healing or the folk healers and have faith in the local wisdom. Additionally, the state should support to give the learning network for the health care of the people with the folk healing methods.
- 4) There should be the promotion or distribution of the knowledge of using the local wisdom of the folk healers for health care through the community hospital and the village public health care volunteers.
- 5) It was found in the research that the body of knowledge of the folk healers depending on the local beliefs and festivals, so the application of the research had to be concerned with the appropriateness and the cultures of each local area.
- 6) It should be presented as the policy for the appropriate merging of folk healing system to the Thai health system, and should be considered the possibility of the merging and the development into the health insurance in the future as alternative ways for people to take care of their health.
- 7) The results of the research should be presented at the National Public Health conference or to the organizations that need to support and develop the folk healers, and should be presented to the units that are responsible for the Thai traditional medicine in order to understand the real problem in taking care of health by the folk healers, and to use as alternatives health care.

#### **2. Suggestion for the next research**

- 1) There should be a study for the creation of innovation for the support of the teaching of the local wisdom in curing deceases by the folk healers.
- 2) There should be a continuation on the study of developmental process of teaching of the local wisdom of folk healers in curing illnesses.
- 3) There should be a study to develop the processes in teaching the local wisdom of the folk healers in curing illnesses.

4) Provincial public health should cooperate with the educational institute to do research on the knowledge of each remaining kind to find the ways to help and develop the inheriting of the knowledge of the folk healing.

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