

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The rational use of drugs, the theme of this study, is one of the most important health issues. Initially, I came to the College of Public Health as the head of a health center who was concerned about the overuse of antibiotics at health facilities. I learnt that there are many technical matters involved, requiring specialists and strong networking and relationship among all health team. Therefore I took a broader focus and concentrated on the rational use of drugs on which I sensed that my colleagues and I can do something together to improve the situation in a practical way.

This portfolio thesis consists of six chapters. The first chapter serves as an introduction to the thesis. Chapter II is an essay on how to improve drug use in the health centers of Muang district, Kanchanaburi province, Thailand. The essay was written with my assumption that the drug use situation can be improved by health personnel with a participatory approach. I described, in my essay, the role of drugs in health care followed by background information on the health center. I stated the rational / irrational use of drugs, factors underlying the irrational use of drugs and the consequences of this problem situation. Then, I proposed three approaches to improve the situation : educational strategies, managerial strategies, and regulatory strategies.

I concluded that an effective intervention combines elements from all three types of strategies, and that no intervention is final.

My proposal, Chapter III, is based on the need for intervention as identified in the above essay. I focused only on Muang district, Kanchanaburi where my workplace is located. But I could find written evidence on the use of drugs situation nowhere. Therefore a baseline study needs to be carried out. The main objectives of the project proposal are to explore drug use in health centers; to collect baseline data on prescribing practice by health personnel; to try out, in Thai context, indicators and methods designed by the World Health Organization; and to improve health personnel prescribing patterns using combined interactive educational interventions, managerial intervention, and regulatory intervention. The proposal was designed based on sense of participatory action.

Chapter IV is devoted to a data exercise on investigating drug use in a health center. It is a feasibility study on implementing, in a similar context of my workplace, methods and tools designed by the World Health Organization. The result showed (1) the average number of drugs per encounter is three; (2) 92.1% of drugs are prescribed by generic names; (3) percentage of encounter with an antibiotic prescribed is 53.3; (4) encounters with an injection prescribed are 6.7%; (5) 86.5% of drugs prescribed are on the essential drug list; (6) the average consultation time is 1.2 minutes; (7) the average dispensing time is 50.3 seconds; (8) 100% of drugs are actually dispensed; (9) 100% of drugs are adequately labeled; (10) correct patient knowledge of dosage is 100%; (11) the essential drug list is available; and (12) availability of key drugs in stock is 91%.

The problems placed on number of drugs prescribed and encounters with antibiotic. From this exercise, though the results cannot be generalized, I learnt that good technical and logistic preparations are important as well as a flexible schedule. I also found some limitations that I need to aware of when in implementing my project in the future, such as unavailability of records, informal environmental atmosphere that caused difficulties in collecting data on consultation time. Most of all, I gained an insight that behavior of health providers is one of a major factor that affects the health status of people.

The presentation, Chapter V, aims at providing brief information on the theme of improving drugs use in health centers. It draws from essay to, data exercise, and then proposal.

The last part of the portfolio thesis, Chapter VI, deals with the annotated bibliography. It presents the selected major literatures, some of which I consulted for my study, while some played stimulation role.

Some of useful information for further reference were gathered in appendix part.

As a personal conclusion from the experience of being a MPH student of the Collage of Public Health, Chulalongkorn University, I am consciously aware that my knowledge, attitude and behavior effect the health status of the people I serve. My teachers and the course contents equipped me with a foundation of critical thinking, research, and socioeconomic knowledge. I cannot promise the solved problems, but I

can only promise that I will always patiently do the best I can to improve the situation. My education guides me to the path of life long learning and has empowered me. Out there, in the real world, my task is awaiting and I am now ready for it.