

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The fourth plan (1977-1981) was the first time that full attention had been given to formulate a national health development plan, taking into consideration the crucial problem of inadequate health services provided by the government to the people in rural areas as compared to urban areas at that time (MOPH, 1990). From the fifth (1981-1986) and sixth (1987-1991) health development plans there was a rapid expansion of health care facilities , especially health centers to provide public health services.

The Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) of Thailand announced an emphasis on the development of health center in this decade (1991-2000 AD). During this ten year period, the Ministry anticipated developing comprehensive health activities and physical facilities in health centers, improving the knowledge of existing health personnel, increasing the number of health personnel and improving the administrative activities of health centers regarding integrated health services such as health promotion, prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and community development.

The health center is the only basic health institution in the government health delivery system that provides the main components of primary health care directly to the people, serving especially to the rural part of country. This kind of health center is important for a country like Thailand where more than 80 percent of people live in rural areas (Shrestha, 1993)

Most of the people view health centers as treatment centers and visit for the same purpose. Treatment of minor ailments is the basic responsibility of health centers. Moreover, the treatment aspect of health care in health centers acts as the bridge between people and health service providers.

Furthermore, health care services demand active participation of people to upgrade their health status. A good understanding between government staff and people usually initiates good participation. A good understanding can only be developed when people are assured of the quantity, quality, and continuity of the services (Sita Ram, 1997).