

CHAPTER I



INTRODUCTION

The goal of universal health insurance is to ensure that all Thai people have access to health care for their basic need. The services must be standardized and satisfactory to the people who used them. Universal health insurance is not assisted by the government, however, any individuals have their own rights to access the health care service. Universal health insurance is guaranteed under the Thai constitution of 1997. Section 52, states that “Everyone is equal to receive free health services from the government as stated in the law...”⁽¹⁾

The National Health Insurance System emphasizes the establishment and use of a Primary Care Unit (PCU) for front-line care. PCUs are to provide comprehensive care, which includes health care, health promotion, disease prevention, and rehabilitation. In the PCU cannot address a patient’s medical needs, patients are referred to other health qualities for secondary care.⁽²⁾

PCU, which medical and social quality, is the main of efficiency service system, and comprehensive care. It is health adviser and individual/family health service of all people⁽³⁾

The most important function of a PCU is to provide basic health care which people can easily access. These sites are familiar to the clients. They also understand the lifestyle of clients and provide a social role than is easier found at a hospital or other institute. As such, the service at this unit should have a social quality that understands the need, as well as meets the expectation and feelings of local people better than other health unit. It must manage a medical knowledge for agree with economic and local culture, as well as to communicate with people in local area. The PCU gives longitudinal care and builds the potential for people to join together for appropriate health care. People can to rely upon themselves and as well as on the health service delivery system. It is a coordinated care, which includes referral to more sophisticated health facilities for complications or more intensive treatment. The PCUs do not need be completely provide all health service, Instead they must be able to properly manage simple health problems with high efficiency. ⁽⁴⁾

Thus it is importance to establish the PCU near a patient's home and near their hearts, so that these units are familiar with people. The health officers in PCU must apply their medical knowledge to agree with the lifestyle, psychology, and society of local people. They must have the management skills for responsive health care, between people and health workers, to foster health promotion together with health care. ⁽⁴⁾

The purpose of establishing standards at the PCU, under the universal health insurance, is to make the Health Center become to be PCU by increase the officers in Health Center to serve the primary care effectively. In the urban areas, which do not

have Health Centers, we will improve old structure, by building comprehensive care in Health Municipality Centers and private clinics. In the area with inadequate PCUs, we will increase amount of PCU for health care. The hospital must adjust its traditional role in order to serve complicated cases, who were referred by PCUs. ⁽⁴⁾

At the present, we do not know the level of consumer satisfaction with service provided by PCUs under the 30 Baht Policy. Even though this new health policy is a main priority of the Thailand government. Thus the health worker must take measures, action under this policy, to learn about the level of consumer satisfaction under the 30 Baht policy.

The 30 Baht Policy was proceed in Phatthalung Province as of 1 October 2001. This policy is new for all both consumer and service provider. Accordingly, researcher studies on consumer satisfaction with services of PCU, under the 30 Baht Policy in Muang District, Phatthalung Province. This type of study had never been implemented before in this district. The results of this study should hopefully improve future health care services by PCU, which will satisfy the demand of patients and promote consumer satisfaction, including an effective health care insurance. The target population will thus have equal access to high standard health care services, due to the legal policy by the current government.

1.1 Rationale

Study of consumer satisfaction with services of PCU is important because PCU is front line care for all age groups with standard quality to serve primary health care, as well as provides advice on many health problems before going to consult a specialist at a secondary care. PCU is ongoing health care and serve rehabilitation from birth until death. It is comprehensive health care in understanding the conditions between service provider and consumer, depending upon physical, mental, social, and economic factors. It also provides health promotion, prevention, health care, and rehabilitation services. PCU is the coordination unit in referral system, linking all medical and social information to maximize benefits for all people.⁽¹⁾

PCU is the closest health service unit, and easy for access. It will be the most important health unit if it used more efficiency. PCU will balance self care and health provider service suitable for consumers. It is to save financial resources if people can have access to home PCU service near their home, instead of going to a secondary care unit for simple health care services.⁽⁵⁾

Phatthalung has 36 PCU. Muang District has 4 PCU (Excluding in Muang Municipality), while are others distributed in other districts in the province. The 30 Bath Policy is a new project. Consumer and health provider are still confused in role and duty of PCUs. Hence it is necessary to study consumer satisfaction with services of PCU under the 30 Baht policy. The results of this study will be used to improve health workers efficiency in the future, and to improve efficiency the overall of the health insurance system. People will receive standard service in an equitable manner

following by the government's policy and which is in accordance with Thailand constitution law.

1.2 General Objective

To analyze the level of consumer satisfaction for health services provided by PCU under the 30 Baht Policy in Muang District, Phatthalung Province.

1.3 Specific Objectives

1. To determine the personal factors and other related factors of consumer.
2. To determine the level of consumer satisfaction with health services provided by PCU in regards to: the convenience of the service, the coordination of the service, the courtesy of the health workers, the provision of medical information, the quality of care and out-of pocket costs.
3. To identify the association between the personal factors and other related factors with the level of consumer satisfaction.

1.4 Research Question

1. What is the level of consumer satisfaction with health services provided by PCUs in Muang District, Phatthalung Province?
2. What factors are associated with the satisfaction level and health services provided by PCUs?

1.5 Scope of Research

1. To study about consumer satisfaction with health services provided by PCU under the 30 Baht Policy in Muang District, Phatthalung Province (Excluding in Muang Municipality). To collect data in February - March 2003.
2. The samples are consumers who have universal health insurance card (golden card) in Muang District, Phatthalung Province. (Excluding in Muang Municipality)
3. The study sites are 4 PCUs in Muang District, Phatthalung Province. (Excluding in Muang Municipality)

1.6 Basic Assumptions

1. In this research study consumers who have universal health insurance card (golden card) and come to use health services provided by PCUs in Muang District, Phatthalung Province (Excluding in Muang Municipality) during weekdays and on weekends.
2. To study consumer satisfaction with health services provided by PCU, by talking a sample of consumers who only use health services provided by PCUs.
3. This research uses a self-administered questionnaire to collect data from consumers.
4. The data obtained from questionnaires is accurate.
5. In case consumers cannot read questionnaires, the researcher will read the question and the consumers will provide the answer.

1.7 Study Limitations

1. Because this study collects data only in Muang District, Phatthalung Province, it does not compare the result, with those of other district or other provinces.
2. The numbers of consumers at PCUs in Muang District, Phatthalung Province vary each day. Prevalence of specific disease / symptoms may follow seasonal. For this reason, this study is representative of the services provided during the study period.
3. This research had limited the time and financial resources. Thus it could not collect the data from the outline target population.
4. This research study only consumer satisfaction with services provided by PCUs, collecting data only from consumers who visit the PCUs.

1.8 Operational Definition

- **Consumer** means people who have universal health insurance card (golden card) and come to use services provided by PCUs in Muang District, Phatthalung Province. (Excluding in Muang Municipality)
- **Satisfaction** means the assessment in positive feedback from the acknowledgement and feeling of consumer toward the health care services provided by PCUs. These include: satisfaction of service's convenience, satisfaction of service's coordination, satisfaction with the courtesy exhibited by health officers, satisfaction with medical information given, satisfaction with the quality of care given, and satisfaction with out-of-pocket costs.

- **Provider** is defined as a person (a health officer) who has the responsibilities to serve patients and give treatment, at the PCUs.
- **Service Provided by the Primary Care Units (PCUs)** means the health care services offered at PCU such as, providing treatment, promoting healthy lifestyle, providing preventive services and offering rehabilitative health care.
- **Golden card** refers to a social welfare benefit offered by the Thai government regarding the provision of reasonable health care . The golden card is specified to apply within regulated areas and hospitals. The card's owner has the rights to receive the health services, as part of the 30 Baht Policy.

1.9 Expected Outcomes

1. To provide this research information for authorities.
2. To determine the quality of health care services at PCUs according to the opinion of consumers.
3. To analyze the characteristics of the health care services provided by PCUs.
4. To identify problems, according consumers perspectives, which will be beneficial for improving the service quality.
5. To collect data which will be useful in improving the PCU's services provision of health the future.
6. To encourage future studies for those who are interested.

1.10 Research Methodology

This study is descriptive research, to aim at learning about consumer satisfaction with health services provided by PCUs under the 30 Baht Policy in Muang District, Phatthalung Province. It was survey research, using a cross-sectional study.

It utilized probability sampling; stratified random sampling and systematic random sampling. The study collected responses from 392 consumers who have the golden card and came to obtain health services at PCUs in Muang District, Phatthalung Province (Excluding in Muang Municipality). The instrument used in this study was a constructed and pre-tested questionnaire. (Alpha = 0.9399) To collected all data by self-administration and interview consumers who can not read during February 26, 2003 – March 11, 2003.

1.11 Step for Present the Results

To present the results as the follow:

Section 1; The General Data of Consumers

Section 2; The Need of Consumers in Designing a Model PCU

Section 3; The Consumer Satisfaction Level with Services at PCUs

Section 4; The Relationship between Personal Factors and Other Related Factors with the Level of Consumer Satisfaction