



## CHAPTER IV

### RESEARCH PROTOCOL

As already stated, there are four major hill tribe health problems: opium dependence, maternal and child health, malnutrition and communicable diseases. The Ministry of Public Health has developed the health services delivery in the hill tribe areas in order to solve these problems. Most hill tribe villages are in the remote areas with limited communication. Some traditional treatments such as spiritual means and herbal medicine have been practiced and passed down for generations. They have the traditional beliefs some of which might affect health problems. Although, the health services are available in some villages, they might not be utilized by the villagers. More over, opium is still available in their communities and it is known to be effective as medicine for treatment of cough, diarrhoea and pain. The use of opium may lead to the problem of opium dependence and the overdose is the cause of death for some cases.

The study of the pattern of health services utilization among the hill tribe villagers and the determinant of choices of each type of utilization, has been useful for the health services planner to develop the health services delivery appropriate to the hill tribe communities. This thesis is the pilot study to determine the pattern and factors associated with health services utilization among the Karen hill tribes. This study confines only

to the curative and maternal and child health services, including family planning services. It is hoped that the result will be useful for the Ministry of Public health to plan an optimal health service delivery to solve the health problems among the hill tribes.

#### Research Questions.

1. Primary research question.

What is pattern of health services utilization among the Karen hill tribes ?

2. Secondary research question

What are the factors affecting health services utilization ?

#### Research Objectives

1. To determine the pattern of health services utilization among the Karen villagers in the remote rural area.

2. To identify the factors affecting health services utilization.

#### Justification of Research Questions & Objective

From the background, we have known that the health problems among the hill tribes are opium use and dependence, maternal and child health care, malnutrition and communicable diseases. The Ministry of Public Health has provided the health services to the hill tribe community with the aim to reduce those health problems. The main health service approaches are the treatment, health promotion and prevention. However, those health problems still

exist. In the areas where opium is available, some people use it as medicine for the treatment of cough and diarrhoea. These symptoms are classified as the respiratory and gastrointestinal illnesses. The use of opium for physical illnesses is one of the major causes leading to the problem of opium dependence. Since the Karen is the majority group of hill tribes in Thailand and the opium dependence among them is higher than other tribes, the study of the health services utilization among them will be useful in planning the prevention of opium use and dependence due to physical illnesses.

The previous studies among the hill tribe communities have shown that there are low utilization of government health services, especially the maternal and child health care as well as family planning services. Many factors that affect their health services utilization have been described in both qualitative and quantitative surveys, but no statistical test of association has been reported.

This study intends to study the pattern of health services utilization among the Karen hill tribes in the areas of curative service, maternal and child health services and identifies the associated factors. The study of curative care utilization looks at perceived morbidity and curative care seeking behavior in the past two weeks. In addition, there has been a follow up study on the diarrhoea and upper respiratory tract infections, since these may cause opium use. For maternal and child health care, the most important activities are the antenatal care, birth attendant, and postnatal care for pregnant women and the immunization for the children. The family planning service has been included in the

study since it directly affect the birth rate and the better spacing of birth would lead to more adequate development and decreased morbidity of resulting children.

#### Design Overview.

This study is a descriptive field survey to describe the pattern of health services utilization among the Karen villagers in northern Thailand. The study design is a combination of descriptive cross-sectional and prospective studies by means of community survey. From the cross-sectional survey, the perceived morbidity which is felt needs has been assessed by asking the villagers about the illnesses in the recall period of 2 weeks. Their care seeking behaviours to alleviate the symptoms of illnesses have also been documented. For the maternal and child health services utilization, the recall period is extended to be 5 years. The married women in reproductive age have been interviewed about the use of antenatal care, birth attendant, site of delivery and postnatal care for their last childbirth, including family planning service utilization and the immunization of their children.

Before the follow-up period, the heads of the household have been interviewed about demographic, socioeconomic, the attitude towards the health services utilization in order to determine the factors affecting health services utilization.

#### Design Justification.

As already stated, this study is the descriptive cross-sectional and prospective studies. The descriptive design is used

to determine the magnitude of health problems. Therefore, it is appropriate for the determination of the pattern of health services utilization.

From the cross-sectional survey, the result obtained is the self perceived morbidity and there may be under reporting or over reporting of illnesses. Moreover, it is only the perceived health needs for curative service. The prospective survey has been used in order to obtain the actual health needs, using a set of clear criteria to assess actual morbidity.

Unlike the morbidity, the event of maternal and child health services utilization is distinct, therefore, the result from the cross-sectional survey can be used to determine the actual needs for health services.

The data obtained can be considered to be of better quality because they are directly derived from the people themselves. The community approach helps to understand the real needs of the people. The information derived can be more useful for planning the appropriate health services to the community than the information from the hospital based approach.