

**THE HEALTH OF THE PROVINCIAL PEOPLE:
A SURVEY STUDY OF FOOD, HEALTH BEHAVIORS AND BELIEFS
OF THE PEOPLE IN CHACHOENGSAO PROVINCE, THAILAND**

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Health Administration is an important task of the government in every country, especially in a developing country like Thailand. Good health brings satisfying work to the people, families and communities as well as the country. From the results of discoveries over a number of years concerning the human body and its functions which have been made known regularly, we can conclude that people are constantly interested in health problems. They have been curious about the structure of the body and how it works and have been anxious to learn how to prevent sickness and preserve health. Each individual wants to develop to the fullest degree the ability and qualities which will make him a valuable member of his community. Accordingly the government must help him to reach his goal by taking a greater interest in how he lives, the foods he eats, the protection he secures from diseases and accidents, his recreation and rest, and the aid he gets from community health programs.

The field survey consisting of interviews and observation on food, health behaviors and beliefs of the people of Chachoengsao province was undertaken to procure the facts and data in the area which were representative of the province and of the great central plain of Thailand.

It revealed that a health problem which most people were facing was the lack of clean and clear water for drinking and personal hygiene, not only in the rural localities but in a large part of the municipal area. A considerable number used no latrine at all, and only some used fly-proof latrines. Food value to maintain good health was also not their main concern, nor was the way of washing their dishes. They disposed of the wastes in such an easy and haphazard way as to invite sickness. Some of them would have nothing to do with the vaccination program and therefore did not benefit from the knowledge now available. Most of them had insufficient recreation and relaxation which were means of relief from tension, boredom, worry and other mental health problems associated with work. This rather poor health behavior was the result of what had been taught from generation to generation, or an imitation of the behavior of others influenced by the surrounding.

This study attempts to describe the efficiency of health administration in the province since 1866 - the date modern medical science came into existence in Thailand through the initiative of King Rama V. The description included education and local government administration concerned with health which were handicapped by the lack of facts and statistical data, lack of planning, of coordination and control. Besides, the Governor was not given full allocation power over the health budget in his province. Such administrative problems have been particularly true in the field of public health service in which the primary responsibility has rested with the central health department or the Ministry of Public Health and not with the provincial administration. The mobile rural developing teams should therefore be organized by the governor's own personnel, camping and working closely with the people as indicated in the plan he has drawn up.

Finally, the writer recommends that health administration should be on the basis of economy as well as on national development plans. A greater interest should be shown by all concerned in the welfare of the people in order to uphold "individualism" as a foundation of a democratic way of life.

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