

Assessing health status in remote villages in hill tribe villages of Northern Thailand

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ABSTRACT

The situation in the hill tribe villages is an extreme one. They are very remote and have minimal exposure to the outside world. They have their own culture, practice and value system which are alien to the research team from outside. Nevertheless, the experience has raised a number of questions regarding the validity and credibility of our means of assessment of health and even the definition of health itself. Reported disillusion of the research team leads to the recognition of our ignorance. The people's culture and value system is an important element in the yardstick to be used in the measurement of their health. The importance of the concept "health by the people" over the existing one "health for the people" is very much evident. Indigenous methods of health care must be appraised. Appropriate technology should on the other hand be introduced into the village in order to get the benefit of the present medical progress. Selection of the technology to be introduced is very important. Unnecessary drugs and methods must be avoided. One should also not impose a new method or system on the people because it is bound to be unsuitable and unacceptable. On the contrary, alternatives should be given to the people for them to have wider choices than the existing one in isolation. The ability to maintain the introduced activity or service must be kept in mind since temporary exposure to something better but unreachable leads to more anxiety and less happiness.

Key words : Health Problems, Hill tribes, Assessing health status, Opiate tests, Validity

Technical report No. DH-1/80. 1980.

Proceeding of the Tenth anniversary meeting of faculty of health science, Mc Master University
Canada, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, May 1980