

AWARENESS OF CHRONIC DISEASES IN THE RAPIDLY DEVELOPING COMMUNITY OF CHON BURI, THAILAND

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Abstract. This study investigated the contributing behaviors to chronic diseases in rapidly developing communities. An exploratory cross-sectional design and focus group discussions were employed for data collection from March, 2003 - April, 2005. Five representative communities located in the rapidly growing industrial region of Chon Buri, Thailand were included. Four hundred twenty-two respondents stratified into various community groups were interviewed. The interview data were analyzed and followed-up by focus group discussions in each community with representative community members. The findings indicate diabetes and hypertension were frequent complaints. Older age groups more often reported chronic disease. Most people, especially those who had no chronic diseases (66.2%), were unconcerned about eating healthy food. These people were little concerned about annual routine health checkups and self-care. Most people had hurried lifestyles with limited time, were stressed, were unconcerned about health or quality of life, and had little information regarding chronic diseases. Dietary habits, age groups, and annual routine health checkups were significantly related to self-reported chronic diseases ($p=0.005$, 0.002 , and 0.002 , respectively). Based on our findings, we recommend the government provide education regarding a healthy life style to prevent chronic diseases. Diet trends should be monitored and appropriate strategies should be developed at the community level.

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