

Non-hospital death in Malaysia: vital registration cause of death versus verbal autopsy (VA)

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Verbal autopsy (VA) is a research tool that helps determine probable causes of death in cases where the cause of death is not ascertained by a medical personnel. Malaysia is in a trial phase for a national implementation of VA for all non-hospital death in the country. This study describes the agreement between the causes of death registered in the vital registration (VR) system with the cause of death determined by VA. **Methods:** This was a cross sectional nationwide study. A total of 19 districts were selected randomly from 144 districts to obtain a nationally representative sample. All deaths from 2013 in all the selected districts was obtained and interview was done by trained paramedical staff using locally adapted WHO verbal autopsy booklet. Cause of death was assigned by trained medical officers or physicians. Data analysis was done using Microsoft Excel and SPSS 16. **Results:** Verbal Autopsy had been successfully conducted for 4096 non-hospital deaths in which VR had specific cause of death for 1446 deaths while the 2650 were given ill-defined cause of death. Using VA, we were able to assign a specific cause of deaths for 67% of these ill-defined deaths. Among specific cause of deaths, the highest agreement between VR and VA was seen at transport accident with the kappa value at 0.80 (Good agreement). Trachea, bronchus and lung cancer had shown a moderate agreement (kappa=0.46), same with liver cancer (kappa=0.47). Other specific cause show fair to poor agreement. **Discussion:** Transport accidents and cancers show good accuracy in being captured by the vital registration system. This may be due to the causes being accurately identified even by lay persons. The involvement of medical personnel at determining the cause of death is essential towards improving the quality of our national mortality statistics.

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Outcomes of an agricultural intervention to improve dietary diversity in children up to age 5 years in the Indigenous communities of Thailand

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: One third of northern Thai Indigenous children aged 0-5 years of Karen and Lua ethnicity are stunted, reflecting poor nutrition. Amongst other factors, food insecurity has been identified as potential cause. Local produce is plentiful during the rainy season, however, this is vastly reduced in the dry season. The aim of the research was to assess the implementation of an agricultural intervention to address food insecurity and poor nutrition. **Methods:** This was a non-randomised control trial involving 4 control villages and 4 intervention villages (n=156). A household survey, anthropometric measurements, and focus groups were conducted at baseline and again at 12 months post implementation. Families with children aged 0-5 years in the four intervention villages were supplied with five hens and four types of vegetable seeds for homestead gardens. Monthly check ups occurred for six months. Statistical analyses and a detailed thematic analysis were completed. **Results:** The average Food Security Score did not improve post intervention. There was a 9.8% decrease in stunting in the intervention village compared to a 4.3% in the control villages. Wasting increased by 1.2% in the intervention village compared to 0.1% in the control village. Families reported the benefits of a convenient and affordable egg supply from the hens. However, in the winter the hens stopped laying and were eaten. Many families indicated that lack of water in the hot season diminished the homestead gardens. **Discussion:** During the initial 6 months of the intervention there was an increase in eggs consumed and vegetables grown by intervention households, however, contextual difficulties limited the sustainability of the intervention. This may explain why the signs of chronic malnutrition, stunting, improved, but wasting, a sign of acute malnutrition, did not. Budget constraints may have meant the community did not fully take ownership of the intervention, affecting sustainability.