

Traditional health practices relevant to maternal and child care in Sri Lanka

This paper reveals a medical anthropological perspective of Sri Lankans' health seeking behaviour related to Maternal and Child Health. Three communities with different characteristics were selected to study behavior patterns in seeking good health and practices followed to promote maternal and child Health. A total of 183 housewives in three different characteristic areas were interviewed by "in-depth interview" and summarized through qualitative research methods. Every society has its own unique behavior pattern, beliefs and practices to cope with the crisis of childbirth. Although cosmopolitan medicine plays an important role in Maternal and Child Care in Sri Lanka, people use indigenous medicine and practice traditional health methods in their daily lives. They choose the most effective medicine from each discipline. For instance people depend on cosmopolitan medicine rather than indigenous medicine for treatment of their babies' illnesses. It was found that house wives practiced both traditional and modern methods to promote health, prevent and treat illnesses of their babies. The practice of traditional methods differed from area to area depending on their own characteristics, i.e., demographic socioeconomic, psycho-social and health condition.