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TECHNICAL REPORT

UNDERSTANDING HEALTH INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOUR AMONG TYPE 2 DIABETES MELLITUS PATIENTS IN SELANGOR AND NEGERI SEMBILAN



MINISTRY OF HEALTH MALAYSIA
NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH (NIH)

INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH BEHAVIORAL RESEARCH
MINISTRY OF HEALTH MALAYSIA

UNDERSTANDING HEALTH INFORMATION-SEEKING BEHAVIOUR AMONG TYPE 2 DIABETES MELLITUS PATIENTS IN SELANGOR AND NEGERI SEMBILAN (NMRR-20-2990-57182)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Health information seeking has been defined as the ways in which individuals obtain information, including information about their health, health promotion activities, risks to one's health, and illness for the purpose of decision-making. It also can be defined as a problem-focused coping mechanism in medical decision-making. The purpose of this study was to identify patterns of health information seeking behaviour (HISB) among T2DM patients in Selangor and Negeri Sembilan government health clinics. This study assessed health behaviour patterns by identifying patients' preferred sources of information, diabetes information types, barriers encountered while searching for information, information needs, patients' health literacy (HL), and the correlations between HISB and HL.

Multi-stage random sampling was utilised in this cross-sectional study to select the eligible patients to answer validated HISB Self-administered Questionnaire (SAQ). A total of 999 patients; 693 from Selangor and 306 from Negeri Sembilan were recruited with assistance by the nurse supervisors at government healthcare facilities in both states. This study found the most preferred sources of health information are doctors, followed by family members and friends. Patients preferred to speak with doctors about their concerns rather than seek information on their own. Aside from that, 92.1% (921) patients stated that they were looking for information on complications due to diabetes, 91.9% (919) patients looking for a balanced diet and 91.8% (918) looking for ways to prevent diabetes complications.

The results of this study also underscore obstacles in accessing health information related to diabetes. A total of 48.4% (484) patients reported a lack of internet proficiency, 25.8% (258) encountered difficulty with complex terms in the information obtained, 25.4% (254) mentioned information being written in a foreign language, 16.3% (163) experienced challenges with poorly organized information, and 14.4% (144) cited communication issues between healthcare providers and patients. The primary motivations for seeking health information on diabetes included 81.4% (814) ensuring proper management and control of their condition, 81.3% (813) gaining a better understanding of diabetes management, 80.7% (807) exploring the effects or complications of diabetes, and 76.4% (764) identifying the optimal treatment for diabetes.

The differences of demographic profiles such as race, gender, age group, employment and time period of being diagnosed with diabetes and their health seeking behaviour were also assessed using Inferential analysis. By race, majority of Malay ethnicity patients were active in seeking information compared to Indian ethnicity. For gender, female patients were more active in seeking health information compared to male patients. In terms of age group, patients within the age 26 to 35 years were more active in seeking information compared to individuals aged 56 years old and above. Besides, it was found that individual who are diagnosed with diabetes within 1 - 5 years are more active in seeking information compared to individuals who are having diabetes more than 10 years. From the employment aspect, individuals from the government sector are more active in seeking information compared to individuals from the private sector and unemployed while retiree are found to be more active in seeking information compared to unemployed.

This study also found there is a positive correlation between HISB and Health literacy with r = 0.35 ($p<0.001$). Overall, the study findings showed that majority of the patients were passive in seeking health information and having limited health literacy. With the average age of patients above 56 years old and most of them lacking proficiency in using the internet, it may contribute to this passive behaviour. Hence, it is hoped that this study will provide important evidence to the stakeholders in planning better health education programmes for individual with diabetes.

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