

Perspectives on Wisdom–Health of Thai Buddhist Nurses through Meditation

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Abstract: The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore Thai nurses' perspectives regarding the meaning of wisdom-health, the characteristics of persons who have wisdom-health, and the importance of wisdom-health to Thai people's overall general health. Purposive and snowball sampling were used to recruit twelve Thai registered nurses who regularly practice meditation. Data were collected through in-depth interviews along with observation and ethnographic records. Data were analyzed using Spradley's method of content analysis.

The main findings illustrated that the meaning of wisdom-health based on the perspective of Thai nurses is defined as having mindfulness (*satti*) and clear comprehension (*sampajanna*). Mindfulness focuses on being aware of, and reminding oneself to know and concentrate on the present moment, while clear comprehension means thinking reflectively on cause and effect. Both mindfulness and clear comprehension enable one to understand the nature of truth or "wisdom" so as to live with happiness. The characteristics of persons who have wisdom-health include 1) using wisdom to live their lives, 2) applying morality and ethical behavior to their lives, and 3) having inner peacefulness. Further, wisdom-health is crucial to the overall general health of Thai people because it helps them attain well-being by way of choosing the right means to solve their health problems both physically and mentally. Realizing the nature of truth leads people to be compassionate toward themselves, their fellow human beings and the environment, which, in turn, can contribute to a peaceful society.

The results of this study provide an understanding of wisdom-health from the perspectives of Thai nurses who practice meditation. Also, these findings could provide a foundation for developing guidelines, regarding assessment and nursing care related to wisdom-health, that lead to holistic care of clients.

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Background and Significance of the Problem

Health is a critical concept in the discipline of nursing, including spiritual health. In Thailand the National Health Act has replaced the term 'spiritual-health,' which is one dimension of health, with the term 'wisdom-health'. Since the word spiritual health

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is translated into the Thai language as “*citta-vinnana*,” this meaning causes confusion for Thai Buddhists. Generally, Thai people believe that *citta-vinnana* means a soul or ghost. The *vinnana* is affected by ignorance that leads to the wrong view of things in life that causes false thinking, false speech, and false action.¹⁻² Thus, Payutto suggested that instead of the Western word “spiritual” or *citta-vinnana*, Thais should use the word “wisdom” or *panna*, because it avoids confusion and is more appropriate for Thai Buddhists.³ On 6 March 2003, the National Health System Reform Committee defined wisdom-health as the insight leading to a harmonious life.⁴ As a result, wisdom-health became a new dimension in the definition of overall general health for Thai society.

Wisdom is defined by Walsh as the deep understanding and practice of skills to matters that are central issues of life.⁵ Furthermore, Buddhadasa defined wisdom as correct knowledge, and understanding of the true nature of things which connect human beings to the proper way with their most appropriate environment.⁶ To live with wisdom is to know and relate to things through an understanding of the process of cause and effect. Creating the desired results can only be done by understanding the cause of the problem and the way to address the problem according to one’s respective needs.^{1, 7}

The nursing professional traditionally has viewed persons holistically. The term holistic is commonly used to describe the nurse who recognizes/addresses the whole person within the context of the care environment.⁸⁻⁹ Nurses, the largest group of health care providers in Thailand, should be made aware of wisdom-health and the need to understand this concept. This is important because nurses are in a position to coordinate the holistic care of clients in Thai society. In particular cultures, the beliefs and values related to health are shaped differently, which leads to different practices and ways of living.¹⁰ Thus, the qualitative approach was considered most appropriate to explore the perspective of nurses in wisdom-health, which is likely to be influenced by culture. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to

explore the perspectives of Thai nurses’ regarding the following questions: What is the meaning of wisdom-health? What are the characteristics of people who have enhanced their wisdom-health? How is wisdom-health important to the overall general health of Thai people?

Method

This study used a qualitative approach. Purposive and snowball sampling were used to recruit twelve Thai registered nurses who met the following inclusion criteria: (a) regularly practiced meditation, (b) identified themselves as Buddhists, and (c) expressed a willingness to participate in the study.

Recruiting Informants

To ensure that suitable informants were found, public documents in nursing about wisdom or wisdom-health were examined. In addition, key informants, identified by the primary investigator during the pilot study (“Perspectives on Wisdom-Health”), were selected based upon the agreement of all of the researchers involved in the study. The twelve nurses who participated in the study were between the ages of 45 and 73 years. Four of them had a baccalaureate degree, four has a master’s degree and four had a doctoral degree. Six of the nurses worked in nursing services, while six were in academia (nursing lecturers). Working duration in the nursing profession was between 20 and 53 years.

Instrumentation

The primary researcher served as the instrument of data collection, along with the interview guidelines. The primary researcher used a field journal which consisted of jotted notes, expanded accounts, and reflexivity during data collection and data analysis. Additionally notepads, a computer and tape recorder were used for data collection.

Data Collection

In this ethnographic study, data collection methods included: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and use of ethnographic records. To fit into the setting, the primary researcher engaged in examining as many aspects of the informants' lives, as the informants allowed. For example, activities included: having lunch with the informants; stopping by the informants' workplaces when convenient; joining the informants' self-help or *dhamma* groups; and participating in important Buddhist activities in the roles of participant-as-observer or observer-as-participant, depending upon the activity or event. Interview times and places were arranged at the informants' convenience and ranged from 40 to 60 minutes. All informants allowed audio-taping of the interviews. Interviews were started with a general question: "*What is your goal when you provide nursing care for clients?*" The probing technique was used in order to gather more information. Second interviews were conducted with eight informants. Third interviews were requested from two informants for the purposes of clarification and assurance that the data were complete. Moreover, the primary researcher used ethnographic records: field journals and supplementary data sources. Data collection continued until no new information was offered by the informants and data were being repeated. Finally, eight informants gave feedback about the accuracy of the interpretation of the findings. The study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of Faculty of Nursing, Chiang Mai University. Safeguards used, in order to provide confidentiality and anonymity for the informants, conformed to the university's guidelines.

Validity and Reliability

This study adopted validity and reliability techniques based on Sandelowski's and Mayan's recommendations.¹¹⁻¹² To address validity, various

data sources were used, saturation of the data was carried out, thick descriptions of the phenomenon were provided, and accuracy validation of the findings, between the primary researcher and the informants, was conducted. To attain reliability, the primary investigator (as the researcher-as-an-instrument) described her background to the informants, approached informants two to three times for interviews, and used various data sources. Throughout the research process and analysis, the primary researcher asked for input from peers and the other members of the research team.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was based on Spradley's content analysis¹³⁻¹⁴ which included making domain, taxonomic and componential analyses.

Results

As nurse informants in this study were Buddhist, who perform regular meditation, their perspective of wisdom-health was shaped by Buddhist doctrine within the context of the Thai culture. The findings were divided into three parts: the meaning of wisdom-health, the characteristics of persons who have attained wisdom-health, and the importance of wisdom-health to the overall general health of Thai people.

The meaning of wisdom-health

Informants described "wisdom-health" as having mindfulness (*sati*, สติ) and clear comprehension (*sampajanna*, สัมปชัญญะ) which enables one to understand the nature of truth, so as to live with happiness. Having mindfulness refers to being aware (การรู้ตัว), reminding oneself to know (การระลึกถึง), and concentrating (ตั้งมั่น), in the present moment, on positive speaking, thinking and doing. Having clear comprehension means being able to think reflectively (คิดพิจารณาไตร่ตรอง). In other words,

engaging in systematic thinking (การคิดอย่างเป็นระบบ) that leads to: (a) orderly analytical thinking (การคิดตามหลักเหตุผล) on matters derived from the accumulation of previous experience; and (b) learning thoroughly from present situations or thoughts, so that appropriate investigation and understanding can take place for the purpose of finding the truth for problem solving. As one informant said:

“Mindfulness is awareness and ability to concentrate on the present. It should be of positive or good things... When mindfulness reminds us to know ourselves or a situation, clear comprehension will be on duty in our minds. Comprehension is reflective thinking that is like having a set of information gained from previous experiences, previous learning, plus new information. (Informant #11)

“Reflective thinking is systematic thinking... After careful reflection, the solution of the problem should be established appropriately and suitably to the custom and culture of the area, the laws of that society, and the precise religious rules. (Informant #5)

Understanding the nature of truth depends on the ability of the mind to really know and comprehend conditions as they truly are, through the working of the neutral or emotion-free mind (i.e., free from desire or non-desire). Being free from desire/non-desire, allows for the mind to accept the truth or gain wisdom (*panna*)—as is related below:

“The understanding in nature of truth is seeing with clear comprehension and mindfulness while our mind is in the emotion-free state—free from satisfaction, dissatisfaction, or delight. That is when our mind is in the neutral state. After that, we see and understand

things as they are. So, we can profoundly understand things. That means to understand any condition occurring at a time, in a context.” (Informant #12)

Based on the informants’ views, understanding the nature of truth or wisdom can be divided into two aspects: the ordinary level (*worldly* wisdom, ปัญญาทางโลก) and the deeper level (*dhamma* wisdom, ปัญญาทางธรรม). The ordinary level refers to understanding the nature of conventional truth or mundane wisdom, which is the seeing and knowing of the reality of everything, as based on worldly knowledge and experience gained from studied principles and experience in daily life. Informants suggested that mundane wisdom can be used in solving physical or bodily problems, for instance, drinking water to quench thirst. While understanding the nature of ultimate truth, or supra-mundane wisdom, is concerned with the realization of the ultimate reality as based on righteous knowledge (*dhamma* knowledge and experiences), which reminds people to know themselves or their situations in the present. This thorough understanding is used in solving sophisticated higher levels of problems in human life, or in coming to terms with suffering that occurs in the nature of the living being. One informant made the statement:

“According to my thinking, there are two kinds of knowledge for wisdom—worldly knowledge and righteous knowledge (*dhamma* knowledge ความรู้ทางธรรม)... We study to be doctors, nurses, or engineers. This is studying. Also, we gain knowledge from experiences in life for daily life survival. This is worldly knowledge for mundane wisdom; therefore, it is fundamental... Righteous knowledge (*dhamma* knowledge) is better than worldly knowledge because it lets us know the real natural causes of suffering.” (Informant #1)

“...According to the righteous knowledge that is informed by ultimate reality...we should be aware in the present, so as to know the nature of the truth of phenomena as they are.” (Informant #8)

Apart from this, the informants concluded that understanding the nature of ultimate truth is further divided into two types: the truth of oneself and the truth of nature. The truth of oneself addresses the fact that human beings or living beings are composed of body and mind, or *rupa* (รูป) and *nama* (นาม). Based on the informants' views, *rupa* means one's body or matter components, without any feelings. The *nama* or mind, however, is conditioned to recognize emotion or feeling. The functioning of *rupa* and *nama* is related to the cause and effect principle or to the *Law of Interdependence* (*Idappaccayata*, อิทัปปจยตา) in Buddhism. After careful reflection, using the cause and effect principle approach, one can understand that everything is interrelated to everything else, as indicated below:

“Beginning from the view on understanding the real states of life and being, the truth of oneself is that all human beings comprise body (*rupa*) and mind (*nama*) as a whole. Human beings' suffering or happiness depends on *rupa* and *nama* only... And one should understand the interrelatedness of everything (*Itappajayata*, อิทัปปจยตา). Everything is related to one, or the whole.” (Informant #11)

The truth of nature relates to the fact that things in the world perpetually are changing (*anicca*, อนิจจัง). That is, when one's body is born, it continually ages. Because we cannot control perpetual change, illness and death occur, along with suffering (*dukkha*, ทุกข์). The body, which we think is ours, in fact, is temporarily ours. Thus, the attachment created by the thought

that this body is 'our-self' is a delusion because in the end the body will return to its own elements. There will be no corporal body, and so, 'non-self' or *anattata* (อนัตตา) occurs. The body, which arises, remains for a time and then ends or dies. This is considered to be the normality of things and, thus, requires us to understand things as impermanent, as dependently originated (of conditioned arising) and as 'no self.' This occurs because a person cannot control perpetual change. What one informant said was:

“Human beings consist of both *rupa* and *nama*, which can disintegrate or decay. After seeing *rupa-nama*, a person sees the arising of *rupa* and *nama*, the being, and the extinction of *rupa* and *nama*. Therefore, they is no-self, *anattata*, so we should not attach to *rupa* or *nama* because they do not belong to us.” (Informant #1)

To live with happiness means one can live by utilizing and understanding the nature of truth or wisdom. This can occur by observing daily life as it grows out of seeing each moment, seeing things as they really are (one's vision), and noting how one relates to each moment and all things observed. In order to connect in the most proper way with one's self and others, within the context of the most suitable environment, one needs to have mindfulness to think, do and speak. Then, one has morality in one's mind and does not harm self or others, but acts unselfishly or less selfishly in order to live happily with oneself, others and the environment. As several informants stated:

“When we understand ourselves, if we do so mindfully, we can remind ourselves to be aware of ourselves in a situation in the present. So, we can refrain from acting in harmful or not good ways.” (Informant #10)

“Thorough knowing helps us to understand better what everything really is. The result is our selfishness lessens.” (Informant #8)

The characteristics of persons who are wisdom–health beings

From the informant nurses’ perspectives, there are three characteristics of individuals who have wisdom–health: ‘using wisdom to live their lives,’ ‘applying morality and ethical behavior to their lives,’ and ‘having inner peacefulness.’

‘Using wisdom to live their lives’ means individuals with wisdom–health are able to make decisions about problem–solving, to continual develop themselves, and to adjust to living with others, within the environment, in a proper and harmonious manner. Such persons are mindful about controlling themselves so as to act properly, both bodily and verbally. These views are supported by the following input from informants:

“Using wisdom to live their life is living with the knowledge of how to consider properly, being able to solve problems, and to adjust oneself... This leads us to be able to look after ourselves and be able to live in our environment without suffering or problems. That is living by using wisdom.” (Informant #4)

“Using wisdom we can understand everything happening to us... We are mindful and know what things are, and we know how we should respond to them.” (Informant #10)

Furthermore, people who use wisdom to live their lives must develop themselves continuously in the self–practice of daily life, as well as in the self–practice required to gain an understanding of ultimate truth or supra–mundane wisdom. Informants

said that in the Buddhist approach there are three methods for gaining wisdom—study (*Sutamaya–panna*, สุตมยปัญญา), reflective thinking (*Cintamaya–panna*, จินตมยปัญญา) and mind development (*Bhavanamaya–panna*, ภวานามยปัญญา). The wisdom gained from the *Cintamaya–panna* and *Sutamaya–panna* methods are mundane forms of wisdom. Mind development (*Bhavanamaya–panna*) involves using insight meditation or *Vipassana kammatha*, in order to gain an understanding of ultimate truth or supra–mundane wisdom. As two informants stated:

“We must try to practice mindfulness and clear comprehension. This is self–development from our daily life. It is a learning process.” (Informant #7)

“In fact, in Buddhism, there are three kinds of wisdom. Wisdom gained from listening is *Sutamaya–panna*. Wisdom gained from reasoning is *Cintamaya–panna*, and wisdom gained from clear comprehension and meditation is *Bhavanamaya–panna*... This is the arising of pure wisdom, the wisdom gained in *Vipassana* (insight meditation).” (Informant #12)

‘Applying morality and ethical behavior to their lives’ means that people apply moral principles to interact with others and the environment through action, speech, and mind. The moral principles mentioned, by the informants, were having virtues (มีศีลธรรม), which include the *Four Brahmavihara*, มีพรหมวิหารธรรมสี่ประการ (the four sublime states of mind), and the *Four Sangahavathu*, มีสังคหวัตถุธรรมสี่ประการ (the principles for making group integration).

Having virtue means people apply, in their daily activities, the five precepts (*sila*, ศีล) of Buddhism and avoid the causes of a ruinous way

of life (the *Six Apayamukha*, อปายมุขหก). People who apply the precepts use them to guard their minds; to control themselves through body, speech, and mind actions; and to avoid harassing others. The causes of a ruinous way of life obstruct people from becoming good humans. Thus, people observing the five precepts and avoiding the causes of a ruinous way of life, possess happy and normal minds because they do not have any feelings of guilt. This results in healthiness of both the body and the mind. As the following informants said:

“People with morality don’t involve themselves in ruinous ways of life (the *Six Apayamukha*), or in violating precepts. They won’t harass themselves or others. So, they have wisdom-health...Whatever they do conforms to morality and it doesn’t harm them or others.” (Informant #6)

“People failing to observe the five precepts may harass others and make them unhappy, or at least act in ways that can harm their minds. Precepts help our minds to maintain their normal states...There is no disturbance in our minds. Also, our bodies will be in better health as a result.” (Informant #2)

Using the *Four Brahnavihara* (the four sublime states of mind) means that one applies principles that facilitate good relationships with others. The principles comprise loving-kindness (*metta*, เมตตา), compassion (*karuna*, กรุณา), sympathetic-joy (*mudita*, มุทิตา), and equanimity (*upekkha*, อุเบกขา). These principles assist one in relating to others, engaging in happy living, being generous, and treating others in an equal manner. As one informant expressed:

“We need to observe the four sublime states of mind (the *Four Brahnavihara*)...this is a factor in living together. They are loving-kindness

(*metta*), compassion (*karuna*), sympathetic joy (*mudita*), and equanimity (*upekkha*). In normal working situations, we should apply loving-kindness (*metta*). But when anyone has problems or suffers, we can use compassion (*karuna*) towards our colleagues and also towards our patients. Sympathetic joy (*mudita*) is used when people around us are in better positions. Then, we should feel glad with them. Equanimity (*upekkha*) is used when we must punish any guilty junior officials, although they may be close to us. We must be neutral.” (Informant #7)

Applying the *Four Sangahavatthu* (the principles for group integration) means that one observes principles in the sympathetic treatment of others. The *Four Sangahavatthu* comprise giving (*dana*, ทาน), kindly speech (*piyavaca*, ปิยวาจา), providing service (*atthacariya*, อรรถจริยา), and behaving properly in all circumstances (*samanattata*, สมนัตตตา). People who are willing to give (*dana*) should be those who can provide help to others, without causing harm. Kindly speech means that people should control themselves in speaking, using only good and beneficial words. Providing service/useful conduct (*atthacariya*) means people should try to help others as much as they can, behave well, and dedicate themselves to their work and contributions. Behaving properly, in all circumstances (*samanattata*), means that people conduct themselves in such a manner so as to be consistent, impartial and reasonable. Individuals observing the *Four Sangahavatthu* live in society with unity, generosity and happiness. This is supported by the following informants’ statements:

“Giving (*dana*) is offering. Such offering comes from loving-kindness and compassionate feeling, which ensures other people have necessary things. Giving includes forgiving. (Informant #2)

“Our speaking must be good. Our words should be useful. They should not be meant to harm or cause others to suffer. A good example of this is our King. His Majesty says only what should be said, but it has profound meaning. Anyone who can understand His Majesty’s way of speaking can apply it for his own benefit.” (Informant # 10)

“The provision of service should be our main aim. When we are born to live in a family, we need to look at the family’s interests. When we are in an organization, we also need to look at the organization’s interests... Look at what we do in our family, in our organizations and the community... If we take this as our main aim, we will use our knowledge to create useful things. Then, we will work happily.” (Informant #4)

‘Having inner peacefulness’ is the third and final characteristic of people with wisdom–health, and is comprised of three points: ‘living happily according to one’s own circumstances’, ‘having freedom in reasonable thinking’, and ‘having serenity.’

‘Living happily according to one’s own circumstances’ means people can look after themselves and reach their objectives by rationally using resources. Also, they can live in conformance with their environment and can perform beneficial acts for themselves and others. This is supported by an informant’s following statement:

“Being happy means people have the things necessary for living. When it is warm, at least we have a fan. If we can afford it, we can use air-conditioning. But there’s no need for it to be this or that trade mark,

provided that it functions as it should... My happiness, as a lecturer, is to make myself useful. I continue to make myself useful.” (Informant #5)

‘Having freedom in reasonable thinking’ means people know how to think by using reason, so they can solve problems. Freedom in reasonable thinking can happen at the daily life level, and also at the defilement–eradication level. At the daily life level, people apply, with reason, their knowledge and experience to solve problems, especially those involving roles and duties. On the eradication of defilement level, people cultivate their minds regularly in order to gain supra–mundane wisdom; as a result, they decrease their attachment to self, matters, and materials. These ideas are supported by the following statements:

“When people know how to think properly, their freedom will increase.” (Informant #9)

“When we have wisdom–health, we are free from impediments like dissatisfaction, or desire to have and to be. We must be free from the three hindrances—greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*).” (Informant #11)

‘Having serenity’ means feeling calmness and coolness in one’s mind. This feeling results from doing good deeds (with confidence in the goodness of those deeds) and from the continuous cultivation of the mind, so that it truly understands the reality of itself and the reality of nature. People with serenity behavior carry out good, beneficial, and creative acts. They also demonstrate generosity, sympathy and forgiveness toward others. This is supported by the following statement from an informant:

“Serenity is the happiness which occurs through the cultivation of mind... When we want to cultivate our mind, we must act without being selfish.

The main principle is we must learn to forgive. Then, our mind will feel calm...our mind won't feel disturbed. We are cool and calm. You must feel it for yourself." (Informant #8)

The importance of wisdom-health to the overall general health of the Thai people

The informants point out that wisdom-health is a dimension that is important to the overall general health of Thai people because it relates to attaining well-being and contributing to a peaceful society. Attaining well-being results from knowing how to care for and maintain the body through developing and keeping one's mind, both during normal times and during times of sickness, in an equable condition. Having wisdom-health enables one to apply cause and effect investigation, and to consider health problems through reflective thinking so that one can choose the right means to solve both bodily and mental health problems. As stated by two informants:

"Wisdom-health is very important. If we don't have wisdom in taking care of ourselves, we will suffer from illness in body or mind... When we have wisdom in maintaining our bodies in a healthy condition, our minds will also be in good health. (Informant #4)

"I see that wisdom-health must come with physical and mental health. If I lack wisdom-health, I won't employ wisdom in taking care of my health. I will eat whatever I want without paying attention to whether certain foods will cause my cholesterol to become higher or not. It can cause harm to my health." (Informant #5)

A peaceful society can result when people have wisdom-health and an understanding, without

selfishness, of the reality of nature and the truth of living. Humans then need to do creative deeds acceptable to society. This idea was supported by the following statement:

"In having wisdom-health, we will look around, and look at the public. That is, we try to be sufficient, and not inconvenience or deprive others of anything. We are not alone. We must live with others and with the environment... Suppose we run a factory, and let waste water enter a river. That river will be polluted. It takes a long time to treat polluted water. It is clear that it is selfish to think only of personal benefit, without thinking how the public will be in trouble, and how such behavior will destroy the environment too." (Informant #5)

Discussion

The meaning of wisdom-health described in this study is parallel to that of The National Health Commission Office in the National Health Act, BE 2550 (CE 2007), which defined "wisdom-health" as the comprehensive knowledge and awareness of the moment, a thorough understanding of reasoning related to right and wrong, and the benefits that lead to the creation of a kind and generous mind.¹⁵ In addition, the meaning of 'wisdom-health' is also in accord with Pavilai,¹⁶ who indicated that mindfulness and clear comprehension involve: (a) being consciously aware of our body, thoughts and nature and (b) allowing ourselves to see, know, and understand our life and world. When we engage in mindfulness and clear comprehension, an understanding of the nature of truth or wisdom is gained. The consequences, of understanding the nature of truth or wisdom, are that one: (a) governs his/her thoughts to think, act and speak, rightfully,

in accordance with an understanding of the nature of truth, (b) connects himself/herself in the most proper way with others, and (c) selects the most appropriate and suitable environment in daily life in order to have a happy life.

The informants suggested that people with wisdom-health are those who apply morality and ethical behavior to their lives, and have inner peacefulness, which reflects a deep understanding and integration of Buddhist doctrine in their daily lives. This is in accordance with the Buddha's teachings, as noted by Hanh and Khanthong.^{17, 18} People who have an understanding of the true nature of things will be able to solve their problems, transform their suffering, and have more joy, peace and love. All of these attributes will allow them to have freedom in reasonable thinking about how best to live, with compassion, in harmony. This is supported by the Buddhist perspective, as outlined by Chandrangam,¹⁹ who suggested that Buddhists should lead a proper daily life. For example, they should choose materials of real value instead of listening to and following advertisements. Tongdeelert²⁰ mentioned that endless desire leads to chronic suffering in life, until one learns how to live in relation to the notion of "sufficiency." Accordingly, to the recent advice of the King of Thailand, H. M. King Bhumibol, Thai people need to adopt a simple life-style by building their own family economy based on self-sufficiency with few desires.

Hence, people with wisdom-health can enjoy well-being by choosing the right means to solve their physical and mental health problems, and by being in balance with their condition. Sermsinsiri, Sawangarn and Suapan,²¹ and Vasee²² state that wisdom is an important element leading to a state of well-being and to healthy conditions. People with wisdom are healthy, through self-help, because they are able to solve their problems by way of truly understanding the essence of truth. Thus, they are able to keep themselves in balance with others and

with their environment. Phra Maha Suttiyano,²³ has indicated that health, in antiquity, was considered as a beneficial asset and that the individual should take action to preserve it. In addition, one's mind needed to gain and be receptive to wisdom, so that a suitable vision of reality occurred that would not attach itself to materiality, but instead create a person who was generous, compassionate, and helpful to himself/herself and to fellow human beings and the environment.

By comparison, Western perspectives use the term spiritual health instead of wisdom-health. The terms spiritual health and wisdom-health are shaped by culture, religion and ethnicity.³⁻²² According to available literature, based on the Western perspective, spiritual health has been described as a dynamic process involving growth in faith, hope and love; generation of a sense of personal fulfillment in life; and the connectedness of self, others and a higher power. This stimulates our ability and motivation to search for meaning and purpose in life, and to seek a supernatural power or higher being (God).^{23, 24} It can be seen that such a meaning is different from wisdom-health, which emphasizes searching for the understanding of the nature of truth, especially the ultimate truth of nature or supra-mundane wisdom, that enables a harmony of the body and mind, resulting in an ability to live wisely and peacefully.

Conclusion and Recommendations

As to the demographic background of the informants, it was found that all of the participating nurses were religious people who applied the Buddhist doctrine to their daily lives. The informants had their own definitions of wisdom-health (having mindfulness and clear comprehension) which enabled them to understand the nature of truth, so as to live with happiness. Their definition of wisdom-health has influenced their ways of life. According to the

informants' views, the characteristics are composed of using wisdom to live their lives, applying morality and ethical behavior to their lives, and having inner peacefulness. Regarding the significance of wisdom-health to overall general health, the informants indicated important benefits for those who attain well-being, and contribute to a peaceful society. Since the specific characteristics of the Thai culture has been influenced by Buddhism for a long time, the study's findings reflect that these Thai nurses' perspectives, on wisdom-health, were interrelated with Buddhist teachings.

The results of this study add to the existing knowledge about the meaning of wisdom-health, the characteristics of a person who has wisdom-health, and the significance of wisdom-health to Thai people within the context of the Thai culture. Such additional information could prove helpful in guiding nursing practice, administration and research. For example, the knowledge gleaned from the study could be used to help clients achieve wisdom-health, by fostering their ability to gain wisdom or the understanding of the nature of truth. Nursing administration could develop strategies that provide a supportive environment for nurses to attain their own wisdom-health. Future research needs to consider the development of instruments that assess the presence of wisdom-health. Replication of this study would be advisable using nurses from different ethnic backgrounds and religious preferences (i.e. Christian, Islamic), and nurses who have limited understanding of the principles of Buddhism.

Regarding the limitation of this study, one must use caution in generalizing the findings to nurses in other socio-cultural settings or nurses who are non-Buddhist. In addition, since this was a qualitative research study, one has to assume that the informants were truthful with the primary researcher during the interview process.

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ทัศนะของพยาบาลไทยพุทธเกี่ยวกับสุขภาพทางปัญญาผ่านการปฏิบัติ กรรมฐาน

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บทคัดย่อ: การศึกษาวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพครั้งนี้มุ่งศึกษาสุขภาพทางปัญญาตามทัศนะของพยาบาลไทยในประเด็นความหมายของสุขภาพทางปัญญา ลักษณะของผู้ที่มีสุขภาพทางปัญญา และความสำคัญของสุขภาพทางปัญญาที่มีผลต่อสุขภาพของคนไทย กลุ่มตัวอย่างที่ศึกษาเป็นพยาบาลวิชาชีพไทยที่มีการปฏิบัติกรรมฐานอย่างสม่ำเสมอ จำนวน 12 ราย คัดเลือกกลุ่มตัวอย่างแบบเฉพาะเจาะจงตามคุณสมบัติที่กำหนด ร่วมกับการส่งต่อโดยผู้ให้ข้อมูล (snowball sampling) ทำการรวบรวมข้อมูลด้วยวิธีการสัมภาษณ์แบบเจาะลึก ร่วมกับการสังเกต และการจดบันทึกเรื่องราว วิเคราะห์ข้อมูลตามเนื้อหาด้วยวิธีของสปราดเลย์ (Spradley)

ผลการศึกษาแสดงให้เห็นว่า ความหมายของสุขภาพทางปัญญาตามทัศนะของพยาบาลผู้ให้ข้อมูลหมายถึง การมีสติสัมปชัญญะ โดยสติจะเน้นในการรู้ตัว ระลึกรู้ และตั้งมั่นในปัจจุบัน ส่วนสัมปชัญญะเป็นการคิดใคร่ครวญตามหลักเหตุผล ที่สำคัญทั้งสติและสัมปชัญญะจะทำให้เกิดความเข้าใจในธรรมชาติของความจริงหรืออีกนัยหนึ่งคือ “ปัญญา” นำไปสู่การดำเนินชีวิตอย่างมีความสุข สำหรับลักษณะของผู้ที่มีสุขภาพทางปัญญาประกอบด้วย 1) อยู่อย่างผู้ใช้ปัญญา 2) มีคุณธรรมและจริยธรรมในชีวิต และ 3) มีความสุขสงบภายใน ส่วนความสำคัญของสุขภาพทางปัญญาต่อสุขภาพของคนไทยคือ การมีสุขภาพจากความสามารถในการเลือกทางปฏิบัติแก้ปัญหาทางสุขภาพทั้งทางกายและจิตได้อย่างถูกต้อง รวมทั้งความเข้าใจในความจริงของธรรมชาติทำให้บุคคลมีความกรุณาต่อตนเอง เพื่อนมนุษย์และสิ่งแวดล้อม ก่อให้เกิดสังคมที่สงบสุข

ผลของการศึกษาครั้งนี้ทำให้มีความเข้าใจอย่างถ่องแท้เกี่ยวกับสุขภาพทางปัญญาตามมุมมองของพยาบาลไทย นอกจากนี้ผลการวิจัยยังเป็นข้อมูลพื้นฐานในการพัฒนาแนวทางการประเมินสุขภาพทางปัญญาและให้การพยาบาลในมิติสุขภาพทางปัญญาแก่ผู้ใช้บริการ นำไปสู่การดูแลสุขภาพแบบองค์รวม

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คำสำคัญ: สุขภาพทางปัญญา, ปัญญา, ทัศนะของพยาบาล

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