

Prevalence & experience of contact with traditional healers among patients with first-episode psychosis in Hospital Kuala Lumpur.

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Patients with mental disorders in Malaysia often seek help from traditional healers prior to consulting psychiatric service. The objective of the study is to determine the prevalence and experience of contact with traditional healers among patients with first-episode psychosis in Hospital Kuala Lumpur (HKL). **Methods:** This is a hospital-based cross-sectional descriptive study of 50 in-patients with first-episode psychosis in HKL. Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-IV Clinical Version for Axis I Disorders (SCID-CV) was used for establishing diagnosis. Socio-demographic data, information on help-seeking pathways, and experience of contact with traditional healers were determined through face-to-face interview and semi-structured questionnaires. **Results:** Twenty seven (54%) of the patients had at least one contact with traditional healers prior to consulting psychiatric service, and it was the most popular first point of non-psychiatric help-seeking contact (48%). About a quarter of them (24%) had 3 or more contacts with traditional healers prior to consulting psychiatric service. The most common type of traditional treatment received was prayer (25, 96.3%). Only 2 patients (7.41%) reported having some beneficial effects from traditional treatments. There were two patients who reported having adverse experience with traditional healers. Among those who had sought help from traditional healers, one third was recommended by at least one of their traditional healers to seek medical help. **Conclusion:** History of contact with traditional healers prior to consulting psychiatric service was common among inpatients with first-episode psychosis in HKL. There may be potential meaningful collaborations between psychiatrists and traditional healers for better management of patients.

Keyword: Traditional healers; First-episode psychosis.