

**Local Ideas and Practices Diabetic Patients  
in Myanmar within a Pluralistic Health Care Context**

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This study explores Myanmar people's ideas and experiences in relation to diabetes, and in particular examines their ideas regarding the causes, severity and nature of the disease and how it should be managed, as well as its impacts upon their everyday lives. This pluralistic health care system in Myanmar is also examined in terms of impacts upon people coping with diabetes.

This qualitative study was conducted in Chan Mva Thar Si Township, Mandalay in Myanmar, during which time six patients at different stages of diabetes and suffering from varying levels of severity of the disease, plus with different socio-economic statuses, were interviewed in terms of diabetes, their ideas on its cause plus the treatment being provided, as well as impacts of the disease upon their lives.

The study reveals the different ideas and perceptions on diabetes held among lay people and medical doctors in Myanmar. During the initial stages of the diseases, through there is no medical evidence of the patient having it, our informants told us they felt generally unwell and so regularly sought treatment from a variety of health resources. The informants also stated that, having identified the presence of the disease, stabilizing the blood glucose level in order to control it is not compatible with their lifestyles. Furthermore, our informants mentioned the difficulties they face and reluctance they feel at following the medical advice provided in order to control the disease. The informants' ideas on holism and their perception on quality of life undermines their ability to adjust their behaviour in line with the medical advice provided, such as reducing their intake of certain kinds of food, as this is seen as adversely affecting their lifestyles. During the long period having to deal with disease, traditional medicine was also mentioned by the informants as an important source of treatment, as well as more modern forms of medicine.

The suffering experienced by these diabetes patients is clearly illustrated in this study, and within their disadvantaged context, the informants try their best to manage the disease having learned to live with it and having developed skills and strategies to

cope with the symptoms and their consequences. This study challenges the current medical view on the strategic of diabetes, and suggest that listening to patient's experiences when dealing with the disease would not only benefit health professionals in terms of managing it into the future, but would also make them realize the importance of the social and pluralistic health care context in Myanmar, plus the patients' own ideas and actions and actions in relations in relation to managing the disease.