

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION



Health center is the primary health service provider which is the first service point in public health systems concerning health promotion, protection and prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and care for the handicap. Thailand has been improving public health services since 1913 AD and the health center has been the primary care unit closest to the public. Health center acts as a conjunction between communities and public health service systems which operate within and out of the health service provider. Moreover, the health center supports public health services in village level to promote "health for all" campaign in all communities as appropriate and relevant to economic and social environments of each community.

The Ministry of Public Health formulated plans to upgrade the status of primary care unit during the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> National Economic and Social Development Plan (1992-2001). At present, Thailand has 9,010 health centers equivalent to 100% calculated upon the coverage of 7,225 sub-districts, not the location of hospital (Suwit Wibulponprasert et al., 1996). Each health center covers 4,340 people in average and employs 3-5 staff members (Committee of Public Health, the Senator, 1997)

In 2001, Thailand underwent a process of health system reform in accordance with conditions of Thai society by upgrading the status of health center to become the primary care unit in the universal health insurance coverage. This was to establish a benchmark that all Thais have fundamental rights to have access to health service providers and they must be assured to receive protection of their rights in quality services and the health service provider must be standardized and accredited. According to definitions of the Office of Health Service Network

Development (2001), quality means the services development which is relevant and responsive to situations in Thai society following global trends in the politics, social and economic aspects and the services can satisfy the customers. Standard refers to a set of indicators which are designed under a concept aiming to upgrade and improve the quality of the primary care unit

The Ministry of Public Health has developed guidelines in improving service quality of the health center in the universal coverage of health insurance in the following aspects; number of population and location, integration of areas of responsibility and systems, infrastructures, environment and facilities which support communications between staff and customers, continual data systems, sufficient medical supplies arrangements for the needs in health care, ongoing improvements in treatments and services as well as continual implementations in the community.

Phachi District Health Office in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya has 7 health centers in its area of responsibility which can be divided into one large health center and 6 small ones. Each has 2-5 staff . There are about 20 customers a day for the large one and approximately 10 for the small one. The Health Office in Phachi district has launched the 30 baht health policy on the 1st of October 2001 by applying monetary mechanisms to change work systems and improve efficiency. In addition, organizational restructuring has been conducted, particularly in the primary care unit which refers to all seven health centers. They need to improve themselves to attain the standard in order to be accredited by Health Center Accreditation (HCA).

This study intends to improve the quality of health centers regarding physical environment and infrastructure to achieve the minimum standard of the primary care

unit in the universal coverage of health insurance by adopting the Five S philosophy which has clear and continual procedures. The researcher conducted an evaluation 6 months after the implementation by checking and reporting the number of health centers which pass the standard of the Five S, identifying problems and obstacles in the implementation of health centers and assessing the satisfaction of customers toward the infrastructure and physical environment in the health center.