

The use of traditional medicines and supplements among Vietnamese people living with chronic hepatitis B in Queensland- a community perspective

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Introduction:

The use of traditional medicines has a long history in Vietnamese culture. Many Vietnamese people in Queensland believe traditional medicines and supplements can treat Chronic Hepatitis B (CHB) and/or improve their liver health condition. These beliefs might be influenced by misinformation online and within personal community networks. The Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland (ECCQ), through a program funded by Queensland Health, aims to explore this phenomenon and provide sufficient support and education on CHB to community members.

Methods:

A trained Vietnamese bi-lingual community health worker (BCHW) provides culturally appropriate education sessions in Vietnamese language for people living with CHB referred by their general practitioners (GPs) for a Fibroscan provided by ECCQ. The education is aimed to ensure clients understanding of recommended monitoring, and the use of traditional medicines and supplements is explored. Clients using traditional medicines or supplements are educated on the importance of recognising that they might affect their liver health condition, and advised to notify and discuss any use with their GPs to ensure best health outcomes.

Results:

216 Vietnamese clients living with CHB attended the education session from December 2022 to December 2023. 31 clients (14.3%) reported they used traditional medicines and/or supplements, 31 of these clients (100%) stated they did not disclose using traditional medicines and/or supplements to their GPs, and 30 of

these clients (96.7%) revealed either their family, friends or an online source recommend using traditional medicines or supplements.

Conclusion:

These findings demonstrate that use of traditional medicines and supplements is an issue worth addressing among Vietnamese people living with CHB. Culturally appropriate education sessions in the Vietnamese language conducted by a BCHW is an effective way to explore this phenomenon and to ensure adequate support to these clients. This phenomenon should be addressed within other community education sessions about CHB.

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