

HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIORS FOR PSYCHOSOMATIC SYMPTOMS  
AMONG CHINESE IN HONG KONG

**Abstract**

The western style medical practitioner is usually the first professional approached by Chinese patients for both somatic and ambiguous problems. The present study aimed at finding out 1) the common help-seeking behaviors among Chinese patients with psychosomatic complaints besides medical consultation and 2) the significant correlates and predictors of professional help-seeking behaviors. Previous studies suggested that cognitive factors like illness representation and perceived barriers to treatment might help to determine the help-seeking behavior. Locus of control and personality variables that capture Chinese way of interpersonal interaction were also included to enhance the explanatory power of the model. One hundred and nine questionnaires were collected from three different outpatient clinics. Consistent with the findings of previous studies, Chinese patients were found to rely on informal help from social network. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) was usually sought concurrently with western style medical consultation and ranked as the third most common help-seeking behavior in the present sample. Professional Mental Health Service (PMHS) was the least common way of help-seeking. Hierarchical multiple regression models with a total of six predictors accounted for about 26 percent of variance for help-seeking from TCM. Among the variables, gender, age, attitudinal barriers towards TCM, symptoms reporting and attitudinal barriers towards PMHS were found to be the significant predictors of TCM utilization. Hierarchical multiple regression models for PMHS, on the other hand, accounted for about 13 percent of variance. The perceived inaccessibility of PMHS and the Internal vs.

External Locus of Control were the significant predictors for PMHS after controlling for the effect of demographic variables. Implications of the present findings were discussed.