

Volume 6, No. 1 (Supplement)

June 2011

ISSN 1823-2140

The
National University
with an
INTERNATIONAL REACH



UNIVERSITI
KEBANGSAAN
MALAYSIA
National University of Malaysia

MEDICINE & Health

The Official Journal of The Faculty of Medicine UKM

7th Malaysia Indonesia Brunei Medical Sciences Conference "TOWARDS A HOLISTIC AND INTEGRATIVE APPROACH IN HEALTHCARE"



22nd - 24th July 2011

Equatorial Hotel, Bangi, Selangor,
MALAYSIA

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INFECTIONS AND CULTURAL ASPECTS IN RELATION WITH NUTRITIONAL STATUS AMONG CHILDREN UNDER-FIVE IN TIMOR ISLAND, INDONESIA

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Background:

In the Millennium Development Goals, to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger is one of the goals. In view of that, we studied a community in Timor Island to identify factors related to nutritional status among children under-five, focusing on socio-cultural aspects of the Timorese.

Materials & Method:

A qualitative study was done in Nifuleo and To'i Village, as study sites to represent the population in South Central Timor District. We obtained data through in-depth interview, focused group discussion and observation on individuals who complained symptoms as well as on the community through *posyandu* and health cadres.

Results:

Stunting was the main nutritional problem in both villages. This was related to various infection factors in which upper respiratory tract infection (URTI) was the most prevalent, followed by fever and diarrhoea. Typical local culture of "*panggangan*" in the traditional house (*rumah bulat*) might contribute to URTI. The habit to chew *sirih pinang* (beetle-nut), the suboptimal implementation of five-tables system in every *posyandu* especially for immunization and education on nutrition, and limited access to the primary health centre contributed to the main problems.

Conclusion:

Stunting is the major problem found in Nifuleo and To'i village. Factors that may contribute to this problem include socio-economy, demography and culture. Health care service and providers in sub district Amanatun Selatan still need to be improved. More training with adequate materials for cadres and community are needed. Cooperation with traditional birth attendant (*dukun beranak*) and Non-Governmental Organization in the sub district Amanatun Selatan is encouraged. Road condition and transportation should also be improved.

Keywords:

stunting, nutritional status, children under-five, socio-culture factors