

Exploring barriers and reasons for delays in health-seeking behavior among Myanmar Migrants along the border area, Thailand

Phitsanuruk Kanthawee

Associate Professor, Department of Public Health, School of Health Science, Mae Fah Luang University, Thailand

Pamornsri Inchon

Department of Public Health, School of Health Science, Mae Fah Luang University, Thailand

Sutthichai Nakphook

Department of Disease Control, Ministry of Public Health, Thailand

Santiphap Maungjarmad

Mae Tao Clinic, Tak Province, Thailand

Chakrarat Pittayawonganon

Department of Disease Control, Ministry of Public Health, Thailand

Abstract:

Timely healthcare access is essential for disease prevention and control, yet many migrants face persistent barriers that delay medical care. This cross-sectional study, conducted at Mae Tao Clinic in Tak province, Thailand, examined the barriers and reasons for delays in health-seeking behavior among adult migrant patients, including displaced individuals, refugees, and migrant workers from Myanmar. Using a validated survey adapted from the WHO Behavioural and Social Drivers of Healthcare framework, data were collected from 1,410 outpatient participants. Findings reveal that the most common reasons for the delay were mild symptoms (72.25%), a long travel distance and crossing the border to the clinic (61.26%), and concerns related to illegal immigration issues (56.02%). Financial barriers, high costs (30.89%), and a lack of health insurance (16.75%) were also significant. Other barriers included the inability to take time off work (20.94%). The minimal factors were distrust of healthcare workers and fear of medical procedures (0.52%). The results emphasize the multifaceted nature of healthcare delays in border communities. Public health policies must address both structural and perceptual barriers by enhancing healthcare accessibility, expanding insurance coverage, legal flexibility in case of illness, and providing flexible healthcare services for working migrants. Promoting health literacy and early care-seeking behaviour is essential for reducing disease burden and strengthening health equity at the intersection of migration and public health policy.

Keywords:

Migrant health, healthcare access, health-seeking behavior, border communities, public health policy.