

POST-PARTUM PRACTICE BY LAO WOMEN AND RAW FOOD CONSUMPTION BY VILLAGERS IN RURAL LAOS

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A study on the post-partum practice by Lao women and raw food consumption by rural villagers was carried out in Xienglairkhok (Makong village) and Phoxay (Lao Loom village) in Phalanxay District, Southern Savannakhet of Laos. Ninety-seven mothers whose children were <5 years were interviewed for their post-partum practice and 200 different adult villagers were also asked about their raw food consumption behavior.

All mothers in Xienglairkhok were rice farmers while only 76% in Phoxay were ($P<0.001$). The median (range) years of schooling of the mothers was significantly higher in Phoxay [5.5 (0-11)] than in Xienglairkhok [0 (0-11)], ($P<0.001$). The proportion of the mothers who stayed on hot bed after delivery was significantly higher in Xienglairkhok (88%) compared to Phoxay (61%), ($P=0.003$) but the mean (95%CI) duration of hot bed stay (days) was statistically shorter in Xienglairkhok than in Phoxay [4.1 (3.6-4.7) vs 7.5 (6.5-8.4), $P<0.001$, respectively]. Fifty-three percents and 72% of the mothers from Xienglairkhok and Phoxay, respectively restricted their food for at least six months after delivery ($P=0.05$), and 93.5% of them were not allowed to eat white buffalo meat and red tail fish. The proportion of the mothers who breastfed their children was significantly lower in Phoxay (81.5%) compared to Xieng Lairkhok (98%), ($P=0.04$) but the median (range) age (days) when their children were given supplementation food was statistically younger in Xienglairkhok [3 (1-150)] compared to Phoxay [60 (1-240)], ($P<0.001$). All and 64% of the mothers in Xienglairkhok and Phoxay, respectively fed their infants with chewed sticky rice ($P<0.001$).

Of 200 villagers interviewed about raw food consumption, 91% reported to have had eaten raw meat or crustacean before and the frequency of those who are still consuming raw meat or crustacean was significantly higher in Xienglairkhok (83%) than in Phoxay (68%), ($P=0.01$). The mean (95%CI) age started to eat raw meat was significantly younger in Xienglairkhok compared to Phoxay [7.5 (6.8-8.2) vs 13.8 (11.8-15.8) years, $P<0.001$]. The proportion of the villagers who ate raw fish, pork, beef, shrimp, crab, and snail was significantly higher in Xienglairkhok (76%) than in Phoxay (51%), ($P=0.007$). The proportion of the respondents who know about the consequences of raw meat consumption was significantly lower in Xienglairkhok than in Phoxay ($P<0.05$). Health education on the correct post-partum practice and consequence of raw food consumption needs to be urgently and widely provided in the rural Laos.

Keywords: *post partum practice, raw food, rural Laos*