

S1.5

Community Foot Care Service: A Pioneer Multi-disciplinary Partnership Program for Elderly Foot Care

NG P¹, Tam W^{2,4}, Yeung M^{2,4}, Chau M^{3,4}, Leung F^{3,4}, Community Geriatric Assessment Team⁵

St. James' Settlement¹,
Physiotherapy Department²,
Occupational Therapy Department³,
Wong Chuck Hang Hospital⁴,
Ruttonjee Hospital⁵

Introduction:

Foot problems are a major cause of disability and functional deterioration in elderly. They also reduce the quality of life of the elderly. The majority of patients with foot problems rely on hospital podiatry service and often experiencing a long waiting time. The establishment of the Community Foot Care Service not only provides the community dwelling elderly a professional foot care in an integrated and multi-disciplinary approach, but increases their accessibility to podiatry care.

Purpose of the Project:

The project focused on enhancing podiatric care to the poor and socially deprived elderly, who was neglecting their foot health. Besides, to maintain the post-hospital discharged high risk elderly and minimise unplanned readmission and foot ulcer recurrence rate. Finally, to reduce the demand on hospital podiatry service.

Material & Methods:

The pilot community foot care project was the collaboration of St. James' Settlement and Hong Kong East Clusters' hospitals. The team included geriatrician, geriatric nurses, podiatrist, physiotherapists and occupational therapists. The foot condition profiles of 12 selected old age homes were investigated. Samples were recruited by convenience sampling. Common foot problems and risk factors for developing pressure sores were identified.

Results:

Prevalence of toenail pathology was 87% among the screened elderly. Foot ulcer was found to be 16%. Fungal skin infection was 24%. Other dermatological disorder like hyperkeratotic lesion was 15%. Structural deformity such as hallux abductovalgus was 45%. Risk factors for sore development included lack of protective devices, and poor sitting position. Podiatric treatments were provided and elderly with physiotherapy and occupational therapy needs were referred accordingly.

Conclusions:

It is necessary to evaluate the elderly foot health in order to design an appropriate foot care program. The project provided a partial picture of the foot problems affecting old age home residents. A similar model of such a seamless and efficient foot care service would cater the podiatric needs at the community level.