

Outreaching Volunteer Service for patients living in the private old age homes (POAHs)

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Introduction

In view of the lack of social support among some patients living in the POAHs, outreaching volunteer service has been developed to meet the needs of these patients.

Purpose of the Project

1. To equip volunteers with basic communication skills and helping attitudes
2. To show support and concern to patients living in the POAHs

Material & Methods

In phase 1, volunteers attended training groups to learn basic communication skills and helping attitudes. In phase 2, medical social workers identify needy patients living in the POAHs, and refer them for this service. Health Resource Centre is responsible for coordinating volunteers to provide visits to patients in POAHs.

Results

A total of 32 volunteers attended training groups. They highly rated the usefulness of the training (mean= 9.0, 0=very bad, 10=very good). From mid-March to the end of June, 2007, 11 patients have been referred by MSWs for the outreaching volunteer service. Patients and family members were very satisfied with this volunteer service (mean= 8.7, 0=the worst, 10=the best).

Patients experienced changes after volunteer visits, including

- a. Reducing feelings of boredom and loneliness,
- b. Feeling care and concern,
- c. Having someone to talk and discuss,
- d. Better subjective well-being,
- e. Minimizing negative thoughts.

Patients showed appreciation on the following qualities of volunteers, including

- a. Kindness and enthusiasm,
- b. Genuineness,
- c. Responsible, and
- d. Communicate with patients effectively.

Conclusions

This project showed encouraging results. Two objectives have been fulfilled. Volunteers were equipped for the service, and enjoyed providing visits. At the same time, patients' social support was enhanced. It is perceived to be a "win-win-win" project for hospital, volunteers and patients.