



Free Papers Presentation

Patient Empowerment for Management of Chronic Illness: Study on Diabetes mellitus

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Introduction:

Diabetes mellitus is a typical chronic illness that relies much on the patients to modify their life style to control their diabetes. Other than medication, we have to find effective means to empower the patients to take actions to change their health behaviors in order to manage their diabetes.

Purpose of the Project:

The project aims to formulate a patient self management program to empower the patients attending the General Outpatient Clinics and with unstable control of their diabetes to have better management of their diabetes mellitus.

Material & Methods:

HKSRCRN has developed a referral system with Lek Yuen and Ma On Shan General Out-patient Clinic in Shatin, Sai Wan Ho in Eastern District, Ngau Tau Kok Jockey Club Clinic in Kwun Tong and Cheung Sha Wan Clinic in Shamshuipo. Patients with HbA1C reaching 7% or higher would be referred to HKSRCRN by the clinic doctors during their follow-up visit at the GOPC. Then, social worker of HKSRCRN assessed these patients; invited them to join a DM talk, and recruited them to join the Diabetes Mellitus Self-help Course (DMSHC) with the purpose of enhancing their self-efficacy to self manage their diabetes. During the DMSHC, the participants were encouraged to join a mutual-aid self-help group with monthly gatherings for long-term mutual support among these participants. A randomized controlled study has also been conducted for the patients referred from Shatin General Out-patient Clinics.

Results:

From August 2005 to December 2008, over 800 DM patients were referred from the above- mentioned GOPCs. The patients learned and practiced the skills to make use of blood glucose monitors to self monitor their condition. Moreover, they also learned to relate their blood glucose data to their exercise habits and the foods they have taken in the previous day before they take the data. It helped to motivate them to do more exercise and better control of the diet as the means to control their diabetes. The results of the randomized controlled study showed that there was significant increase in the DM Self Efficacy Scale in the experiment group ($p < 0.001$) and the difference between experiment group and the control group was significant. Other than the improvement in their self efficacy, there was also significant change in their diet habits including removing skin when eating poultry. Above all, the Hb1c of the participant have been significantly improved.

Conclusions:

HKSRCRN can work hand in hand with GPOCs to share their burden on empowering the persons with diabetes mellitus to self manage their disease. In the long run, the demand for medical treatment will be less as these patients are better equipped with self-management skills themselves.