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Telephone Nursing Consultation Service - Improving the Health of High Risk Elders in the Community with a Collaborative Community Health Care Program

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Introduction:

In Hong Kong, health services are delivered in compartmentalized institutional settings and there is still a lack of good co-ordination among various health care services, particularly in the community. There has been no provision of instant medical advice or support for the homebound elders and their care-givers in the existing public health care system apart from the AED service. In view of this; there is an urgent need to develop a good support such as a telephone nursing consultation system to fill the service gap in the community.

Purposes of the Project:

(1) to identify high-risk elders to target our resources to those in need; (2) to bridge the service gaps of various health care units; (3) to monitor the health and social needs of the high risk elders proactively and provide timely interventions; (4) to provide advice for the most appropriate health care resources, and avoiding the unnecessary use of acute health care services. (5) to empower elderly clients and their care-giver for self-management.

Method:

The Telephone Nursing Consultation Service (TNCS) adopts the 'high risk database and alert system' of the HA CMS information system to capture high-risk elders in the community. The TNCS nurse identifies problems by performing assessment via phone calls. Appropriate clinical protocols are utilized to guide the nurse's clinical decisions. To ensure collaborative efforts, the TNCS nurse further liaises with the CNS, Community Allied Health, GP, MSW, volunteers, and NGOs in the district to provide appropriate community support. A prospective control study with around 100 samples in each group was carried out to evaluate the health services utilization between 2 groups of elders.

Outcomes:

(1) The TNCS has served as an excellent platform to interface across different levels of care. (2) The service contributed significantly to provide timely intervention and follow-up. (3) It has empowered clients and their care-givers for self-management. The overall satisfaction rate from clients reached 95.6%. (4) The TNCS proved cost-effective in decreased total AED attendance by 36.5% ($p=0.025$) and decreased total emergency admissions by 35.8% ($p=0.05$).

Conclusions:

The Telephone Nursing Consultation Service has been shown to be a successful and promising model to improve community health and reduce unnecessary acute hospital admissions.