

Empowering Caregiver Program for Dementia

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Introduction:

Caring a demented elderly at home is stressful. Recent researches found that behavioral disturbance, functional dependence and lack of community support induced significant caregiver stress. Empowering Caregiver Program (ECP) for Dementia was a collaboration program between hospital and community partners. It was developed to empower caregivers to continue caring of demented elderly in the community.

Purpose of the Programme:

- (1) to equip caregivers with caring skills and community resources
- (2) to relieve caregiver stress and facilitate caring in the community

Methods:

Subjects with Clinical Dementia Rating scale (CDR) 1 and 2, and their caregivers were recruited to join the program. ECP included six sessions of education talk which provided by Occupational Therapist, Doctor and Social worker, one home visit for consolidation of caring skills and home modification, and one community visit to Day Care Centre. Subjects were undergone detailed assessments including Mini-Mental State Examination, Geriatric Depression Scale, Disability Assessment for Dementia and Neuropsychiatric Inventory. Stress of caregivers was evaluated by Zarit Burden Interview. Post assessment was done 3 months after the program.

Results:

Seventeen patients and their caregivers were recruited with four of them dropped out. Mean age of patients was 75.5 years old. Nine of them with CDR 1 and four with CDR 2. After the program, despite of further decline in cognitive performance ($\downarrow 13.2\%$) and functional performance ($\downarrow 11.8\%$) of patients, depressive mood of patients was improved ($\downarrow 44.4\%$), behavioural disturbance of patients was greatly reduced ($\downarrow 60.1\%$) and caregiver's stress was relieved ($\downarrow 12.9\%$).

Conclusion:

Holistic care including knowledge, skill transfer in hospital and home environment and timely community support, helped to improve emotion and behaviour of demented elderly, and also relieved caregiver's stress. ECP facilitated caring of demented elderly in the community with quality of life and at the same time reduced hospitalization and medical care.