Evaluaton of Nursing Program for Anorexia Management in Advanced Cancer Patients

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Introduction
Anorexia is common in advanced cancer patients in Hong Kong, leading to weight loss, nutritional deficiency and functional incapability. Targeting at anorexia in advanced cancer patients, nursing program has been launched since May 2013 in QEH Hospice Day Center. Patients are invited to join the program if they have poor appetite and PPS level of at least 60%. The program employs Patient Generated Subjective Global Assessment to examine weight loss, changes in food intake, functional status and metabolic stressors. It uses Edmonton Symptom Assessment Scale (ESAS) to evaluate anorexia-related distress. The program is an interactive group education. Management guidelines include psychosocial and nutrition strategies. Psychosocial issues are assessed by Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale. Patients with depression and anxiety are counselled by medical social workers. Practical tips and demonstration of high energy recipes are provided with nutrition education leaflet.

Objectives
The key objective of the anorexia nursing program is to promote a model of care that enables early identification, documentation and optimal management of anorexia in advanced cancer patients.

Methodology
A prospective study was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the nursing program. All patients joining the anorexia nursing program between 1st May 2013 and 30th April 2014 were included. The knowledge of managing anorexia acquired by patients was evaluated by a 5-question questionnaire. Numbers of correctly answered questions before and at the end of the talk were analyzed using Wilcoxon signed-rank Test. Anorexia-related distress was measured by ESAS at baseline and reassessed
through an individual interview or telephone follow-up one week after the interactive education session. Change in anorexia-related distress was evaluated by comparing the ESAS score before and after the program using Wilcoxon signed-rank test.

**Result**
Fifty patients were included in the evaluation. Median age of patients was 72 years-old (range, 51-87 year-old). The top 2 cancer diagnosis included lung cancer (18 patients) and colorectal cancer (12 patients). Regarding education level, 4 patients received tertiary education, 12 patients secondary education, 24 patients primary education and 10 patients were illiterate. The mean numbers of correctly answered question before and after the session are 0.54 and 4.18, respectively. There is a significant increase in number of correctly answered question after the session compared with baseline (p<0.01). Mean baseline ESAS score is 4.46 and mean EASA score after the program is 3.02. There is a significant reduction in ESAS score at 1-week after the session compared with baseline (p<0.01). In conclusion, anorexia nursing program is effective in cancer patients, with significant improvement in knowledge about anorexia management and reduction in anorexia distress after the program.