



Service Priorities and Programmes
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Submitting author: Ms S Y HUNG

Post title: Advanced Practice Nurse, PYNEH, HKEC

Exploring patients' hidden problems that affect health to improve chronic disease management

Hung SY, Cheung YH, Wong MY

Family Medicine and Primary Health Care (FM & PHC), HKEC

Family Medicine and Primary Health Care (FM & PHC), HKEC

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Introduction

Chronic diseases are among the most prevalent and costly health care problems. Treatment of patients with chronic diseases will be one of the main challenges of medicine, because they are often influenced by psychosocial factors. Unmet psychosocial needs will promote poor coping, decrease the progress of disease control.

Many patients do not know that job-related stress, financial issue etc. can affect their chronic disease control. Chinese culture also does not want to talk about their personal problem/s to health care professional.

Integrated Family Medicine Nurse Clinic (FMNC) was set up in April 2016 in Chai Wan General Out Patient Clinic (CW GOPC). The objective of the clinic is to provide a one stop holistic nursing care and management to patients with chronic illnesses or multi-morbidities instead of focusing on single condition to meet physical and also psychosocial needs of patients.

Objectives

- To review the prevalence of psychosocial problems of chronic illness patients who follow up in FMNC, CW GOPC
- To identify and understand the common psychosocial problems of patients
- To provide information, counseling, education or referral for patients

Methodology

For patients who were referred to FM NC, nurse will do a comprehensive assessment in the first follow up. The nurse will assess not only physical parameters and investigation results, she also assesses all psychological, social, spiritual information. The nurse will explore the social situations, attitudes, beliefs and worries related to the chronic disease and self-care issues, and assesses the well-being and psychological status including cognitive dysfunction; stressor(s) and family support of patient; and

educates on relaxation exercise and offers psychological support; refers to social worker for counseling if necessary. She also explains both emotional and physical stress could worsen the chronic disease management, e.g. increase the blood glucose level.

Result

From 1-4-2016 to 31-12-2017, there were 193 patients attended the service, 34% of patients found having psychosocial problem/s, some of them had more than 1 problem:

- 35.3% had family problem, 26.5% had job-related stress, 20.6 % had financial problem; 20.6% felt lonely; 14.7% had carer stress; 5.9 had parenting problem; 2.9% had gambling habit

After nursing intervention and counselling, >80 % of these patients built up positive rapport with nurses. It was found that 58.8% had improved HbA1c, 32.4% had improved lipids profile, 11% had improved diet control, 9.2 % had improve drug compliance.

Psychosocial needs of patients are always hidden. Healthcare professionals should not only focus on patient's physical problem/s, addressing those hidden psychosocial issues are important and enhance clinical outcome.