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Elements in Sustaining a Diabetes Patient-led Exercise Support Group in association with Well-being Enhancement

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Introduction

“Fit 形糖” is a diabetes exercise support group established since 2004 at Prince of Wales Hospital, by Diabetes Centre and Community Rehabilitation Network. Aims formulating a patient group in promoting regular exercise for diabetes care.

The support group has regular meeting 2 times per month for simple health check, sharing session and doing 八段錦 exercise together. On average, 40-60 active members would attend the group each time, which last for 2 hours/visit.

Having 13 years of time, the group has grown through different stages, from nurse-led group in early stage, assisting members development in the middle stage, and comes to current mature status having patient-led operations.

Currently, diabetes peer volunteers could coordinate, run and lead the exercise group independently, facilitate support, sharing and cultivate friendship among members. In contrast, nurses & social workers could shift the role as partners, professional advisors and provide administration support whenever in need. It could well demonstrate supportive group partnerships power in diabetes care. In this survey, elements were explored for making a supportive group sustainable and successful.

Objectives

- To explore the reasons of keeping diabetes patients to participate support group for years
- To look for any association on well-being index with the duration of joining support group

Methodology

A cross-sectional survey was performed on an event-meeting (New Year celebration and diabetes talk) on 6.1.2018. A self-developed questionnaire was designed.

The survey including 4 parts: demographic data, existing exercise habits, reasons of keep attending the support group and well-being index (WHO-5 questionnaire) were asked.

Result

Survey was given to 50 members, respond rate was 82%. Among the 41 returned surveys, 46% were male, 54% female; age range was 30-86 year-old; 74% aged >65yr-old; 10% having DM <1 yr, 15% diagnosed 1-5 yrs, 20% diagnosed for 6-10yrs, 55% have DM for >10yrs; 35% were treated with insulin.

About the length of joining the support group: 23% joined for <1 yr, 37% for 1-5 yrs, 40% joined for >5 yrs.

The survey findings identified 3 top rated elements in sustaining members to attend the group for years:

1. Doing exercise together, 2. Sharing DM self-care experience, 3. Cultivating peer support and developing friendship from the group.

2/3 of members(67%) stated to have exercise >150mins/week as recommended. 95% members agreed the support group could help them building up exercise habit; 89% agreed the group could improve their diabetes control; 97% agreed the group could promote their well-being status.

About the well-being WHO-5 results (0-100 marks, <50marks indicates low mood, higher score means better well-being status), it is observed higher marks score is proportional to the duration of joining the support group:

WHO-5 score of newly joined members was 50marks; joined for 1-5 yrs was 74marks; joined >5 yrs was 80marks. It also reflected joining Exercise Support Group could enhance Well-being status.

In conclusion, the finding of survey got an encouraging result that joining support could help to build up exercise habit, "exercise together" and "peer sharing and support" are the key-elements in sustaining the support group. Besides, joining the support group with times could promote well-being status as well.