



Service Priorities and Programmes
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Physiotherapy Service Remodeling to Manage Growing Demand of Chronic Low Back Pain Patients: Insight from an Effective and Efficient Group Exercise Therapy

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Introduction

There is always a huge demand for physiotherapy service by chronic pain patients. In order to shorten the waiting time for out-patient physiotherapy service of patients with chronic low back pain (CLBP), a structural group exercise therapy has been established since September 2017.

Objectives

- To shorten the waiting time of new patients with CLBP to cater for the demands
- To empower patients' self-management skills on chronic pain condition through group exercise
- To improve pain level, disability level and pain self-efficacy of CLBP patients

Methodology

CLBP patients referred for physiotherapy were screened by experienced physiotherapist in individual assessment session. Suitable candidates were triaged to physiotherapist supervised group exercise therapy. A 5-session program was implemented including exercise therapy, pain relief modalities, education on back condition, pain concept and self-management. Waiting time for the first physiotherapy consultation, Numeric Pain Rating Score (NPRS) for pain level, the Roland-Morris Disability Questionnaire (RMDQ) score and the Pain Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (PSEQ) score were regarded as the outcome measurements.

Result

During September 2017 to December 2017, 44 patients with CLBP have been allocated to group exercise therapy classes after individual assessment and screening. Median waiting time for physiotherapy service for CLBP patients was improved from 41.0 to 11.3 weeks. Mean NPRS, RMDQ and PSEQ Score were significantly improved from 5.48 to 4.26 (-22.3%) ($p < 0.001$), 11.00 to 8.57 (-22.1%) ($p < 0.001$) and 35.65 to 41.73 (+17.1%) ($p < 0.001$) respectively.

With this group exercise therapy model, CLBP patients can access and benefit from physiotherapy with a shorter waiting time. Clinically, the pain level, disability level and pain self-efficacy of CLBP patients were improved after the therapy. Group exercise therapy is an effective and efficient service model to cope with the growing demand for out-patient physiotherapy service, and hence it should be implemented and evaluated regularly to enhance the service quality.