



Service Priorities and Programmes Electronic Presentations

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Mealtimes Buddies Program (老友記伴食計劃)

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Additional elements of socialization and personal attention to the mealtime

Introduction

A high prevalence of malnutrition in hospital patients continues to be areas of concern. TMH M&G Department collaborates with M&G Rehab Ward, Speech Therapy Department and Community Services Centre to start the pilot Mealtime Buddies Program (老友記伴食計劃) in 3.2017. Mealtimes Buddies (simplified as MB) provide volunteer service to encourage and assist geriatric patients with behavioral eating problems in eating and drinking during lunch time at geriatric medical convalescence ward.

Objectives

The project aims at providing assistance and encouragement by volunteers (mealtime buddies, MB) during the mealtimes to geriatric patients staying in TMH Rehabilitation ward with behavioral eating problems in order to enhance their nutrition intake in a timely and comfortable way.

Methodology

A working group composed of doctors, nurses, speech therapists and social worker (for volunteer service) was formed in 6.2016. It (1) sets up the selection criteria for suitable patients for the program, (2) formulates the workflow, (3) organizes MB volunteer service and trainings, (4) monitors the program implementation and (5) evaluates the program. MB have provided supports to our geriatric patients since 3.2017. Each volunteer takes care of 1 to 2 patients during each lunch time session. They (1) help to check whether the patients receive right meals, (2) help the patients to prepare their trays for feeding, (3) report any important issues observed during the mealtime to nursing staff, (4) encourage the patient to increase the oral intake and (5) assist ward staff to record patients' intakes for program evaluation.

Result

The program started in 3.2017 after being approved by the TMH Q&S Department. However, because of volunteer recruitment problem, the program was suspended for 8 months and was finally re-implemented on 21.11.2017. There are 5 MB (with 49 attendances) providing 3 lunch time service sessions per week. From 21.11.2017 to 26.1.2018, MB provided 25 visits to 9 patients with a total of 53 attendances. During the service sessions, reasons for meal refusal e.g. poor mood, food tastes, personal food preference etc. were explored. MB had used different strategies including elements of socialization and personal attention that they learnt from training to tackle the meal refusal problems. The amount of food intakes of patients increased and the moods of them improved. Two long-stay patients (with LOS more than a year) were successfully discharged afterwards. Apart from benefiting the patients, our volunteers also experienced strong sense of self-achievement as their efforts were rewarded by the improvement of patients' medical conditions. Due to these positive preliminary results, the program will be expanded to other wards to cover more patients.