



Service Priorities and Programmes
Electronic Presentations

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Nurturing patient self-help group members to become volunteers and lay leaders

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Introduction

As a result of their breathing problems that limit activities of daily living, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) patients often view themselves as burdens to their families. With time, many become socially withdrawn and psychologically depressed. Patient self-help group provides a platform where people in similar circumstances can offer emotional support and share tips on how to cope with their chronic disease.

Objectives

1) To evaluate the outcomes of a COPD patient self-help group 2) To develop patient volunteers and lay leaders

Methodology

North District Hospital pulmonary rehabilitation programme (PRP) graduates were invited to join a patient self-help group. To equip patients with mutual help skills, three sessions of lectures and workshops were organised by physiotherapists, respiratory nurses and chaplains. Graduates were encouraged to register as hospital volunteers. It was agreed that monthly meetings would be held.

Result

Seventeen COPD patients participated in the training course held in May-June 2012. Upon graduation, the group arrived at a consensus on their name "BreatheStrong" (健氣組). Average monthly meeting attendance was 14. After registering as hospital volunteers in October 2012, ward visits were organized. Divided into small groups and accompanied by trained chaplaincy workers and hospital staff, patient volunteers paid visits to nine patients. BreatheStrong members were then invited to share their experience with new PRP participants. Consequently, two new PRP graduates started joining the group's weekly exercise classes held at a nearby Community

Rehabilitation Network centre. Simulation training was offered to Institute of Vocational Education students before they embarked on a home visit service programme for COPD patients. BreatheStrong members participated in role plays as patients in exacerbation and shared the feelings of the chronically ill with the young students. Students rated 5 out of 6 in their evaluation of role play sessions. A BreatheStrong member was invited to meet with Hospital Accreditation surveyor while another participated in a press conference as a COPD advocate.