



**Service Priorities and Programmes**  
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**A survey in exploring the knowledge and attitude of post-discharged community dwelling patients in dealing with constipation**

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**Introduction**

Constipation is a common problem in older people and is known to be associated with increasing age. Although it does not contribute much discomfort or co-morbid medical conditions to older people, it is needed to clarify their common myths of constipation, by promoting a healthier lifestyle and changing the unusual beliefs about their bowel habits.

**Objectives**

1. To survey the prevalence of constipation problems among older adults who are actively participating in Geriatric Day Rehabilitation Centre (GDRC) after discharge from Medical Department. 2. To identify their common knowledge and skill in managing constipation. 3. To make recommendations for future study to design a bowel management program for older people.

**Methodology**

In 2013 summer, 11 students from local higher educational institutions, under the summer student attachment program, were appointed to support the social recreational activities at GDRC. They would talk with the patients about constipation by using a set of guiding questions. The questions focused on (1) history of suffering from constipation, (2) lifestyle in coping with the problem, (3) any strategies used to manage and resolve the problem, (4) willingness to receive education and information about constipation, (5) views about whether health care professionals could help them to relieve the problem. All the subjects are adults with cognitive alert (AMT>7), for those dysarthria or aphasic patients were excluded.

**Result**

By convenience sampling, 37 patients with ages from 49 - 88 were recruited. 25 patients (67.6%) were complaint of constipation. It might last from months to years. 35% claimed that they had certain sense of discomfort such as abdominal pain and distension. There were divergence results in their belief about the causal factors in constipation. The most common method to eliminate the problem was taking laxatives

(37.8%). In regarding to the complications, 56.7% did not know the consequences on poor bowel habit. Through the survey, it enables our patients to increase awareness of constipation as well as it is the grounding work to support about the necessity to develop the healthy bowel promotion program in the near future. The healthy bowel habit can be promoted by early detection and early intervention in form of health education in fluid intake, diet modification, lifestyle changes, exercise and bowel habit training.