

Evaluation of students' learning experience of primary health care practicum on lifestyle modification for older people/ frail older people in the community

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Introduction

This primary health care (PHC) practicum aims to increase students' awareness of health issues and challenges in the community via conducting health survey, performing basic health assessment, developing relevant health promotion plan, and evaluating the outcomes of the practicum. This poster talks about the health promotion of healthy lifestyle to the older people/ frail older people in the community via PHC practicum. Healthy lifestyle can reduce the risk factors of chronic diseases and also empower older people/ frail older people to be physically active, eat healthily and reduce consuming alcohol and tobacco.

Objectives

The aims of this study are to explore the students' awareness of health issues in community, learning experiences in health assessment, health practicum and communications with the older people via the PHC practicum.

Methods

Recruitment

- 11 nursing students joined the PHC practicum
- 24 community-dwelling older people were recruited via a non-governmental organization in Shatin district

Training before the practicum

- Three workshops on
1. Health survey and assessment skills
 2. Concept of normal ageing process
 3. Planning of health promotion

First home visit

- Students were paired up and visited the older people
- Providing basic physical assessments namely body weight height, Body Mass Index and blood pressure
- Interview with older people about healthy lifestyle in terms of diet, physical activity and cessation of smoking and alcohol consumption

Second home visit

Developed and delivered a tailor-made health promotion plan on healthy lifestyle to them

Evaluation

Focus group interview
Submission of reflective journal

This study adopted a mixed method design including data collected from health survey and physical assessment from older people, a semi-structured focus group interview and reflective journals from participating students. This is part of the data abstracted from the students' reflective journals.

Results

Health problems among older people / frail older people

Medication adherence

"At first, I could not imagine the life of the elderly who lived alone, I thought that they could take care of themselves in some extent. However, I was wrong, I ignored the diseases that they are suffering which they were hardly to take care of themselves. For example, they may forget to take the medicine or they had no one to take care with them when they had the fever." CL

Smoking habit

"The biggest challenge is that one of my clients is unwilling to quit smoking and reduce the amount of alcohol he drink everyday. I used to feel frustrated as he was not willing to do so to protect his and his family's health even though he knows the advantages of keeping away from these bad habits and the disadvantages of doing so due to addiction and dislike of water." TSP

Imbalanced diet

"The client told us that she loved to eat congee with salty meat few years ago. Once, she had been sick and consulted a doctor. When the nurse helped her to check the blood pressure, she was shocked as the blood pressure was much higher than before. The nurse then asked her about her diet and she realized that it may be caused by the congee she ate." TL

Lack of emotional support

"What they need, other than the physical needs, would be the emotional support. During our visit, I found that they were very happy that they could talk with others to share about their life and feeling. When we asked about their body condition and gave some health advises to show our empathy, they were so willing to talk with us. This experiences gave me a support to me as well to work harder to become a nurse." CL

Results

Positive learning experience

Enhancing communication skill with older people

"In this PHC activity, I have learned how to interview an elderly with appropriate manners and accurate wordings. Both of my clients are quite smart and can follow my questions most of the time. However, they sometimes went out of the track and I had to bring them back to the topic. It is quite a challenging part of interview as it consumes much time and the interviewee may think you are not respecting him." (???)

Enrichment in knowledge about caring older people

"I acknowledge the age-related changes in the digestive, cardiovascular and respiratory system of older adults. I also learn more about how to develop a healthy lifestyle such as the nutritional requirement. As we have to provide basic physical assessment to older people, the skills of taking vital signs that we have learnt in fundamentals of nursing therapeutics 1 (SN2121) have been revised and trained." WKW

Improvement in health promotion strategies (ABC model)

"Additionally, I have learned the ABC model in conducting a healthy promotion plan. However, I think I need some improvement in this area. It is because affective learn is quite hard to grasp. I was not able to catch what my clients care about and what is important to them. If I have another chance later, I will make a bigger effort on it." TL

"Most of the elderly was accepted and willing to perform the exercise with me during health education. To sum up, the experience of the activity help me to found out the health education delivery strategies and the planning process of tailor-made health promotion." DC

Challenges in the PHC practicum

Insufficient knowledge to answer questions

"This time, when I was being asked about the symptoms of stroke, I was not able to answer the elderly and I needed to check the information in the phone" TSP

Difficulty in following up the progress

"It applied the nursing process including assessment, diagnosis, planning, intervention and evaluation but it was difficult to analysis the long-term effectiveness of the health promotion plan due to the length limit of the activity." DC



Discussions

According to students' reflective journals, this PHC practicum provided them positive learning experiences in gerontological nursing. The students understood more about the health problems encountered by older people / frail older people in the community. Besides, their clinical skills like vital signs taking were enhanced and communication skills were improved. Debriefing were important components in PHC practicum. Students shared what they seen, processed, learnt, troubleshoot among their service experiences into the debriefing session. They reflected and discussed on what, how to adopt in their future nursing study by enlightening their motivation to learn and practice more for the future career development. Hence, the development and learning of the students via the PHC practicum addressed the needs of community-dwelling older people / frail older people and provided support to them.

Conclusion

This PHC practicum increased the students' awareness of health status of older people / frail older people living in the community of Hong Kong. Through the PHC practicum, we could further enhance the nursing students' level of competence and affection in terms of interpersonal skills, teamwork, problem solving and social responsibility.