

Evaluation Of An Inpatient Group-Counselling Program For Patients with Hyperlipidaemia

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INTRODUCTION

- ⌘ Dietary intervention constitutes one of the most fundamental treatment therapy for patients with hyperlipidaemia^{1,2,3}.
- ⌘ Group session is one of the common teaching styles adopted for nutrition education. It has been adopted in the outpatient setting and for health promotion initiatives^{4,5}.
- ⌘ The orientation of most dietitians in acute hospital setting is towards individual patient encounters. The introduction of a group counselling program for in-patients is a **novel approach** to medical nutrition therapy in Tan Tock Seng Hospital.

The Group counselling Program was developed with the following objectives:

- ⌘ To provide dietary education to hyperlipidaemia patients and their caregivers.
- ⌘ To enhance nutrition education through the dynamics of the group sessions. These include factors like social support among patients and sharing of experiences in facilitated discussions⁵.
- ⌘ To deliver the dietetics service in a cost-effective manner.

AIM

To evaluate patients' satisfaction of an inpatient group-counselling program and its effectiveness in increasing their nutritional knowledge.

METHODOLOGY

- ⌘ An inpatient group-counselling program on "Cholesterol and Diet" was developed and conducted by the dietitians for patients and caregivers.
- ⌘ The sessions were held once to twice a week from 11am-12pm in the ward tutorial room between February and August 2002.
- ⌘ Patients referred to the dietitians for cholesterol lowering advice were screened for suitability and scheduled to attend the one-hour session conducted in either English or Mandarin.
- ⌘ Patients who had hearing or visual impairment, were drowsy, non-ambulatory, non-conversant in English or Mandarin and did not have caregivers, who were obese, with renal diseases, congestive cardiac failure or/and any other nutrition-related co-morbidities were excluded from the session.
- ⌘ Patients scheduled to attend the session had to complete a 'Dietary Practice Questionnaire' prior to the session so that their dietary patterns could be ascertained.
- ⌘ The sessions conducted were catered to the varying needs of the participants. Active participation in discussions and questions were encouraged during the session.
- ⌘ PowerPoint presentation and printed materials were used to support the verbal information provided.
- ⌘ A 'Nutrition Knowledge Questionnaire' was designed based on the program content. An evaluation of the participants' nutritional knowledge was obtained at the beginning and end of the session using the questionnaire. Paired t-test was used to compare the mean nutrition knowledge scores before and after the session.
- ⌘ Post-session feedback on patients' satisfaction was also obtained using the 'Patient Feedback Form' which was designed for the program.
- ⌘ Selective patients, for example those who were overweight or had diabetes, were followed-up for individualised meal-planning and counselling after the group session.

RESULTS

- ⌘ 114 patients and caregivers completed the program with feedback.
- ⌘ 33% agreed that the program achieved all its objectives and 57% agreed that it achieved most of its objectives.
- ⌘ 44 % and 43% rated the program very useful and useful, respectively.
- ⌘ 92% found the duration of the program just right.
- ⌘ 31% and 74% of the participants rated their knowledge good before and after the program, respectively. 66% found the presentation clear and easy to follow, 69% rated the dietitian good in sustaining their interest and 25% rated excellent (Figure 1).
- ⌘ 49% of the participants preferred to attend group program and 32% preferred to attend both group and individual sessions (Figure 2).
- ⌘ 93 patients and caregivers completed the pre- and post- nutritional knowledge questionnaire. 21 responses were excluded due to incomplete questionnaires.
- ⌘ Paired t-test showed a significant improvement in the nutrition knowledge scores after attending the program ($P < 0.01$).

Figure 1. Participants Feedback on Group Session

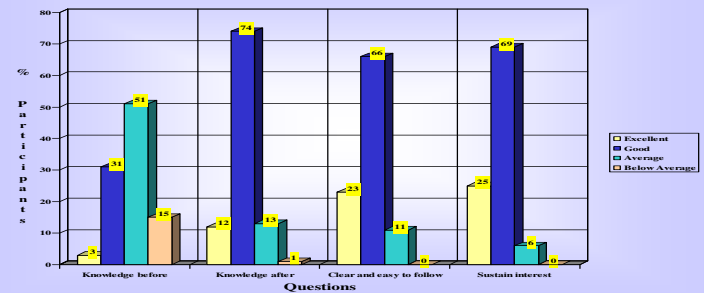
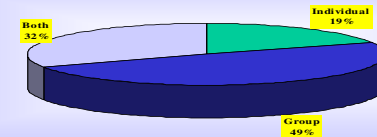


Figure 2. Preference for Session Type



DISCUSSION

- ⌘ This novel approach to medical nutrition therapy has been well received among the patients and their caregivers. They were generally satisfied with the way it was conducted and found the program useful. Almost half of the participants preferred attending a group program.
- ⌘ The improvement in the participants' nutrition knowledge after the program may motivate the initiation of dietary changes among the patients. However, it must not be assumed that nutrition knowledge gain alone would lead to behaviour changes. Further evaluation in this aspect will be required.
- ⌘ Since almost one-third of the participants preferred to receive individual counselling as well as to attend a group session. A follow-up session with individualised counselling can enhance the quality of nutrition therapy and may optimise patient outcome.

CONCLUSION

- ⌘ The group-counselling program was effective in improving the nutrition knowledge in cholesterol lowering among the patients and caregivers.
- ⌘ A high patient satisfaction to the program also supported the continuation of this new service.

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