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The Development of Community Care for Enhancing the Quality of Life in Disabled Older People

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Background: Disabilities are a range of impacts from chronic illness that are common in older people. The limited mobility results in declining activity and an increasing dependency. Rehabilitation is then required to increase the independency and quality of life.

Method: Participation action research was used to develop rehabilitation care for the disabled in the community. A sub-district with seven communities in a province nearby to Bangkok was chosen. The population of 6047 people included 1001 people aged 60 years and above. From the screening of the health center, 15 people were categorized as disabled, while 97 had limited mobility. Questionnaire-based interviews of their daily activity, symptoms of depression, nutrition (Mini-Nutrition Assessment, section 1), risk of falling (Thai FRAT), risk of getting pressure sores (Braden Scale) and their self-perceived health status were taken to confirm their level of ability. Focus-groups were conducted to gather information from family members.

Results: More than half (61.9%) of the subjects were female, with an average age of 73.4 years. Most people were independent (86.6%), with only three people being shown to be highly dependent. Nonetheless, they perceived themselves as having a good (67%) or moderate (33%) health status. The focus groups revealed that family members and village health volunteers mainly took care of the disabled, and they expressed a lack of confidence in the rehabilitation care provision. The teaching of chronic diseases and rehabilitation strategies was developed, where caregivers were educated and trained by researchers. Most of the trainees had more confidence and satisfaction with their improved rehabilitation skills.

Conclusion: Continual rehabilitation training is essential to sustain the required knowledge and skills for caregivers of the disabled elderly in the community, and is also a critical requirement to keep disabled people in their family and community.

Key words: Disability, rehabilitation, care

Biography:

Tassana Choowattanapakorn is an assistant professor at Chulalongkorn University. She has completed her PhD in Gerontological Nursing at La Trobe University, Australia. Her research interest is Gerontological Nursing. She has published many articles in different journals.