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Elderly Health Services at Senior Centers in an Urban South Korean Community

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Purpose: The elderly population in Korea is increasing rapidly. The proportion of the elderly population older than 65 years old was 13.2% in 2015, and that proportion is getting higher (Statistics Korea, 2016). Chronic disease management is the biggest difficulty facing Korea's elderly population. Of those aged 65 years old or more, 90.4% had at least one chronic disease, and 49.4% had three or more chronic conditions (Jeong et al., 2014). Medical expenses of the South Korean elderly population occupied 36.8% of the total medical expenses (Statistics Korea, 2016). The purpose of this study was to identify the current status of elderly health services provided by urban community senior centers in South Korea and to pinpoint any improvements or recommendations needed for the South Korean senior centers to better serve elderly population.

Methods: To obtain a more in-depth understanding of elderly health services, focus group interviews were conducted with six senior center nurses, five elderly health experts, and four elderly attendees of senior center services (n=15). The content analysis method was used for data analysis, where condensed meaning units were abstracted and labeled with codes to be sorted into themes.

Results: The first identified main theme, "challenges of senior center health services" had the following five subthemes: (1) insufficient availability of elderly health services; (2) lack of resources to meet the elderly health service needs; (3) overlapping elderly health services; (4) unclarified nurses' role; and (5) low utilization and unclarified role of visiting doctors. Five subthemes of the second main theme "suggestions for the future" were as follows: (1) senior centers should act as hubs to connect with elderly health and welfare services; (2) elderly health services provided by senior centers should focus more on disease prevention and chronic disease management; (3) nurse empowerment is needed with better clarification for the nurses' role; (4) institutional regulations in regard to the nurses' role must be established for the senior centers; and (5) educational and administrative resources are needed to better support elderly health services in South Korea.

Conclusions: These findings may help in improving the senior centers in urban community setting to play a key role in contributing to the health promotion, disease prevention, and chronic disease management of elderly individuals in South Korea.

Title:

Elderly Health Services at Senior Centers in an Urban South Korean Community

Keywords:

Elderly, Health services and Senior centers

References:

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Abstract Summary:

The purpose of this study was to identify the current status of elderly health services provided by senior centers in South Korea and to pinpoint any improvements or recommendations needed for the South Korean senior centers to better serve elderly population.

Content Outline:

Introduction

The elderly population in Korea

South Korean senior centers in urban communities

Body

Main point #1: Community health programs led by senior centers

a. promoting the health of older adults

Main point #2: Challenges in utilizing the senior center for elderly health services

a. staff shortages

b. non-standardization

c. other administrative issues

Conclusion

Recommendations for improving elderly health services

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Author Summary: I am applying for a poster presentation: Dr. Boas Yu is currently an associate director of graduate nursing program at Fairleigh Dickinson University in Teaneck, NJ. Her clinical background includes family nurse practitioner and gerontological clinical nurse specialist.