

PH021344: MAJOR HEALTH SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

KEYWORDS: SOCIAL SUPPORT, ELDERLY

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SUPPORT AMONG THE ELDERLY IN KHON KAEN PROVINCE,
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Objectives: The general objective of this project is to develop the plan to strengthen social support among elderly people in Khon Kean Province through evaluation. The specific objectives are 1).to assess the elderly characteristics in four areas; socio demographic characteristics, social network, social integration, and personal health characteristics, 2).to assess the level of perceived social support and factors among elderly people,3).to determine the data about the elderly people, their social network and community organizations, in terms of activities, needs, in addressing social support among the elderly, and 4).to develop the plan, that combines quantitative and qualitative information for the development of intervention, to strengthen social support among elderly people.

Methods: This study used an exploratory and cross-sectional descriptive design with both quantitative and qualitative methods, to elicit evidence to inform the community empowerment process. The study group was composed 756 elders who 60 years old or greater, living in eight villages in Khon Kaen Province, Thailand. A structured questionnaire was used to collect the information and perceived social support was measured by PRQ85. In addition, the in -depth interview were used for assess the elderly and their social network in activities, needs, in addressing social support among the elderly. The data were analyzed using the independent sample t test, ANOVA and multiple linear regressions: with only $p < 0.05$ being considered as statistically significant while content analysis were applied for qualitative data analysis.

Results: The response rate was 97.08%. This study found high level of social support perceived among elderly. According to the PRQ85, the highest dimension of social support perceived among the elderly was the opportunity for nurturing dimension while the lowest dimension was the one is an integral part of group. Results from multiple regressions indicate that educational level, number of elderly close friend, knowing community staff, working status, elderly club membership and joining community party were statistically significant related to perceived social support. In addition, qualitative data confirm that the family is the major support among Thai elderly. Social support among the elderly and their families is an obligation, thus social support occurs in terms of caring for parents and supports all kinds of family activities. The neighborhood has become the important social support source when there are care givers working or living apart. Most of the day time the elderly spend with their friends, thus friends' support influences health behavior, attitude and information. Community leaders and community staff (both community health staff and sub-district administrative organization staff) social support provision were top down activities and cultural activities such as home visits and social activities. Even through in all areas of the study, elderly clubs were held, the activities were monthly meetings by the community health staff with few elders joining the club. Some of the elderly did not join because of their health problems, family duties and some activities not being appropriate for them which some elders refused to do. This study also found that there were no integrated community programs initiated for elderly health and social support. All activities that were running in the community were policy implementations and this study also found that all staff needs elderly care and social support training.

Conclusions: Based on the findings, empowerment process using community forum and AIC were used as the first round among the representative elderly and stakeholders. Empowering Community Initiatives for Strengthening Social Support among the Elderly through Evaluation: A Project for Elderly Participation and Involvement in the Elderly Club were initiated. It is acknowledged that an extensive study with the project implementation and evaluation, wide time span and multidisciplinary research study team are crucial to establish more valid intervention.

Field of the study: Public Health

Academic Year: 2006

Student's Signature

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