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Effects of an Empowerment Program on Health Behaviors and Stroke Risk Reduction of At-Risk Group in Thai Rural Community

Chanjar Suntayakorn, Wilaiporn Rojjanasirat

Abstract

Background: Unhealthy behaviors such as being overweight, have hypertension, diabetes, and dyslipidemia increase the risks of stroke. Promoting healthy behaviors could reduce the incidence of stroke, death, and disabilities. Empowerment was used in this study to help people change their health behaviors.

Objective: To determine the effects of an empowerment program on health behaviors and stroke risk factors reduction of people at-risk for stroke in a rural community in Thailand.

Material and Method: A quasi-experimental study was conducted in sixty participants identified with moderate risk for stroke, according to the Standard Operation Procedure to Prevent and Control of Stroke 2007 of the Bureau of Non Communicable Disease, from two villages in Phitsanulok. Participants were enrolled in experimental (n = 30) and control (n = 30) groups using match pair for sex, age, blood pressure, and blood sugar. The experimental group received empowerment based on the Gibson's model of empowerment (discovering reality, critical reflection, taking charge, and holding on) at week 1, 4, and 8 while the control group received routine care. The study duration was 12 weeks. Instruments used were a questionnaire regarding health behaviors and a form for recording the BMI, blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol, and triglyceride. Data analyses included the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), repeated measure, and independent t-test.

Results: Following the implementation of the empowerment program, health behaviors of participants in the experimental group were significantly better than those of the control group ($p < 0.001$). Risk factors, body mass index, blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol, and triglyceride of participants in the experimental group were significantly lower than those in the control group ($p < 0.01$, $p < 0.001$).

Conclusion: The empowerment program was effective in decreasing stroke risk behaviors and stroke risk factors. Future research using this empowerment intervention program should be conducted in high cardiovascular risk group and patients with other chronic diseases.

Keywords: Empowerment, Stroke, Risk factor, Community

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The Medical Association of Thailand

Address: 4th Floor, Royal Golden Jubilee Building, 2 Soi Soonvijai, New Petchburi Road, Bangkok 10310, Thailand

Telephone: 0-2716-6102, 0-2716-6962 press 0 Fax: 0-2314-6305

E-mail: jmedassocthai@yahoo.com, math@loxinfo.co.th 