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HEALTHCARE EXPERIENCES AND THE NEED FOR HEALTH EDUCATION AMONG RURAL OLDER WOMEN IN KOREA

MOON, HYUNJUNG
DEPARTMENT OF NURSING
FAR EAST UNIVERSITY
CHUNGBUK, SOUTH KOREA

Prof. Hyunjung Moon
Department of Nursing
Far East University
Chungbuk, South Korea

Healthcare Experiences and the Need for Health Education among Rural Older Women in Korea

Synopsis

This is a qualitative study analyzing the experiences of health care and the needs of health education for elderly women living in rural areas using focus group interview. This study is expected to provide basic data to develop appropriate health education program for elderly women in rural areas.

Abstract

Population aging is one of the most important social phenomena in the world, and the increase in the elderly population is a serious challenge to our society. This is because as the life expectancy increases, the likelihood of being put at risk for chronic diseases or damage increases. In particular, the autonomy of the elderly in vulnerable groups living in the community is a subject of constant interest. The chronic disease related to the deterioration of function or the collapse of the social support system degrades the well-being of the elderly and causes excessive expenditure of facility entrance and health care costs.

In 2016, the average life expectancy of Korean women was 85.4 years while that of men was 79.3 years, and women are reported to live 6.1 years longer than men. The percentage of women over 65 is 57.5%, which means that much of the elderly problem is that of the elderly women. Elderly women living alone in rural areas have a low quality of life due to economic decline, social psychological isolation, and lack of social support, and are likely to suffer diseases due to lack of practice of health promoting activities.

Health education programs for the elderly are very insufficient. Especially, rural elderly women are not able to prevent and manage chronic diseases because their education programs are not developed according to the characteristics of rural elderly women even though their health condition is much worse. The development of appropriate health education programs requires a proper analysis of the health status and lifestyle of the target population.

This is a qualitative study that focuses on the health care experiences and health education needs of elderly women living in rural areas through focus group interview. The subjects of this study were elderly women aged 65 and over living in rural areas. We interviewed 28 elderly women residing in rural areas of Yeosu city, Gyeonggi Province and conducted three focus group meetings with 9-10 people. The interview time per group was about 80 minutes, and the interview place was used by the senior citizen centers.

The collected data used a content analysis. Content analysis is a qualitative research method widely used to interpret meaning in the content of large and complex text data. The researcher carefully read the transcribed notes from the recorded interviews and extracted meaningful clauses and sentences. The extracted sentences again classify the common attributes by comparing the differences and similarities, and derive the concept of representative of each category.

The results of the content analysis are as follows: 'insufficient health care resources are taken for granted,' 'continuous hard agriculture', 'continuous pain', 'physical discomfort and chronic disease', 'lack of awareness of falls risk', 'lack of information on health behavior', 'insomnia', 'difficulty in medication', 'inappropriate eating habits', 'loneliness for living alone', 'lack of leisure activities', and 'anxiety about dementia'.

We will develop and evaluate the health education program by applying the topics derived from the content analysis in the future.

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