



Veteran Counseling Care reduces hospital visits for highly-frequent hospital users

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Introduction

In 2001, the NHI administration in Taiwan initiated a counseling program in order to rationalize the use of medical resources by highly-frequent hospital users. Aside from reducing hospital visits as one goal, how to improve the quality and the convenience of medical service with limited budget is also worth studying. Our study was aimed to evaluate the outcome of conducting the veterans counseling care program in a medical center.

Methods

We enrolled 837 veterans who were highly frequent hospital users (≥ 90 visits) of a medical center in Taiwan in 2015. Research tools included structured questionnaires, and received three times of telephone or personal counseling. The outcome of the counseling care was measured by the number of outpatient visits made by these patients throughout the whole year of 2016. Multivariate logistic regression models were used to estimate adjusted odds ratios (OR) with 95% confidence intervals.

Results

After receiving the counseling, 25% of the subjects with face-to-face interviews remained to be highly frequent users, which was less than those with telephone interviews. After adjusting for age, gender, marital status, religion, living conditions and self-rated illness, the subjects who received telephone interviews had a significantly higher risk of highly frequent use of hospital than those who received face-to-face interviews (OR = 1.70, 95% CI = 1.04-2.78).

Table Significant risk factors of highly frequent outpatient use with multivariate analysis shown by odds ratios and 95% confidence intervals.

Variables	Total no. of patients	No. of events	Adjusted OR &	95%CI	p-value
Total	837	287			
Interview					
Face to face	120	30	1.00	(reference)	
Phone	717	257	1.70	(1.04 2.78)	0.0356
Medical behaviors					
Combination of traditional Chinese and Western medicines treatments	154	69	1.93	(1.31 2.86)	0.0010
Preference for treatment of injection	68	34	2.21	(1.30 3.77)	0.0034
Visits to many hospitals and clinics	121	37	0.79	(0.51 1.24)	0.3083
Requirements for medical care	786	268	1.23	(0.64 2.37)	0.5277

Conclusions

Personal interviews resulted in a significant reduction of hospital visits in comparison with telephone communications. It might have helped the patients understand that care provided by one team instead of multiple providers improved the acquisition, organization, and administration of necessary medications for multiple chronic conditions.

Key word: highly-frequent hospital users, medical resources, personal counseling

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