Using a participatory action approach to promote the health literacy of elderly people in the community

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Health literacy is one of the crucial factors that influences chronic disease outcome. Elderly people are the main population that is affected by chronic disease. The purpose of this study was to determine whether the participatory action approach (PAR) program can improve the health literacy of elderly people. This is a quasi-experimental design, in total, experimental group 21 elderly people and control group 20 elderly people, defined in this study as people over the age of 50 years, were recruited. The PAR approach was used to design 12 2-hour lectures on health literacy, including functional health literacy, communicative and interactive health literacy, and critical health literacy. These lectures were expected to increase the cognitive skills and critical thinking ability of the elderly participants. All the experimental group participants were provided with a handbook, which include pictures and text that the participants could use as a basis for designing games, role-playing activities, or learning to use a sphygmomanometer.

Sociodemographic information and the health literacy questionnaire (HLQ) were employed. The HLQ comprises nine parts: (Part 1) Feeling understood and supported by healthcare providers, (Part 2) possessing sufficient information to manage health, (Part 3) actively managing health, (Part 4) social support for health, (Part 5) appraising health information, (Part 6) possessing the ability to actively engage with healthcare providers, (Part 7) navigating the healthcare system, (Part 8) possessing the ability to identify useful health information, and (Part 9) understanding health information sufficiently to manage health. According to the results, the health literacy scores were 9.86±1.55 and 9.65±2.70. In addition, the HLQ scores were improved significantly: Part 3 (P=0.004). The participants’ health literacy level was initially medium, even if not all variables had significantly, but after they joined 12 lectures, their ability to self-manage their health and apply health information to address health problems was enhanced. When an appropriate approach is used, health literacy can be increased and chronic disease incidence and complications can be reduced, especially in elderly people.

Biography
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