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Culturally Sensitive Psychosocial Care Program for Chinese People with Spinal Cord Injury During Inpatient Rehabilitation

Spinal cord injury (SCI) brings sweeping changes to a person's life, and SCI sufferers often experience substantial loss in physical functions and medical complications, as well as a variety of psychological and social constraints.¹ Therefore, psychosocial interventions targeting those modifiable factors (i.e., cognitive appraisal, coping, and social support) are recommended to be provided to those people who suffer from the injury in the earlier stage, which could ultimately enhance their sense of mastery of their daily lives, and self-efficacy in dealing with stressful situations post-SCI.²

Our research team developed a culturally sensitive psychosocial care program (coping-oriented supportive program (COSP)) for Chinese people with SCI during inpatient rehabilitation. The COSP was evaluated in clinical trials, and study findings support the positive effects of psychosocial care on a variety of psychosocial outcomes (i.e., coping, depression, anxiety, and quality of life).³ Four key steps were followed in developing the psychosocial care program: (1) identifying appropriate theories; (2) identifying the evidence base and formulating the initial intervention protocol; (3) culture considerations and modifications; and (4) content validation. The COSP program mainly includes 4 phases: phase 1 (first session): orientation and encouragement; phase 2 (second session): cognitive appraisal; phase 3 (third to sixth sessions): coping strategies; and phase 4 (seventh to eighth sessions): social support and future. A series of cultural considerations were addressed in the program. Culture considerations include communication skills facilitation as Chinese people are found to be more conservative in their expression of feelings than people from Western cultures, and they also expect direction/advice from "experts" and they will be reminded to value their role in acting as an active problem solver rather than an only passive recipient.⁴ Chinese people also often emphasize "harmony maintenance," "collectivism," and "face-saving" in social relationships, and confucianism left a deep imprint on modern cultural values.⁴ In addition, "fatalism voluntarism" is a typical Chinese coping strategy. All cultural issues were discussed/incorporated in the intervention. A panel of experts rated each of the program items in terms of their appropriateness, and the average content validation index of the intervention manual was 0.97 (range 0.50-1.00), indicating very satisfactory content validity.⁵ In summary, the culturally sensitive intervention developed by our research team was initially built on solid research evidence and theoretical underpinnings. Chinese culture issues were reviewed and considered thoroughly in the refinement of the intervention.

Informed Consent: Written informed consent was obtained from all participants who participated in this study.

Peer-review: Externally peer-reviewed.

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