

Cultivating Empathic Communication for Enhanced Primary Healthcare: The Role of the Interprofessional Patient Care Program

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Background

- Hong Kong is facing a growing demand of clinical needs among the elderly and chronic condition patients,
- The community-based Interprofessional Patient Care Project (PCP) program organised by the School of Public Health, The University of Hong Kong (HKU) aims to equip future healthcare professionals with the essential empathic communication skills enhance partnership with various NGOs and District Health Centers (DHCs) in Hong Kong.

Work done

- Undergraduate students working in small groups (N= 5 students per small group), to recruit one patient living with chronic condition at either NGO or DHC.
- Each small group develops a personalized self-care management plan according to their patients' needs, and create a health promotion and prevention packages (to enhance population well-being (Figure 1 and 2)
- At the end of the program, both deliverables are presented to their patient and community partner site and they are invited to provide feedback about both deliverables

Results

- In total, 570 students completed the PCP program.
- 76% of students have gained the skills and confidence to identify, and discuss about their patient's utilization and accessibility of available community resources by adopting the use of empathic communication with their patients (Table 1)
- Students (73%) are able to evaluate the effectiveness of current available community resources and interventions for self-care management and medical compliance in relation to primary, secondary and tertiary preventions (67%) (Table 1).
- 75% of students reported they have established rapport and trustworthy relationship with their patients (Table 2).
- Students (65%) either strongly agree and agree they have strengthened their communication skills by adopting the use of empathetic and professional ethics while conversing with their patients (52%) (Table 2).

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statements below	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The tutorial was effective to identity factors that may hinder accessibility and utilisation of community resources	18%	58%	16%	7%	2%
The tutorial was effective in identifying the types of community resources available	21%	56%	17%	5%	1%
The tutorial was effective in understanding how community resources and/or legislations can improve population health	17%	56%	18%	8%	2%
As a result of this tutorial, I feel confident in discussing how symptom perception, illness cognition, availability of community resources and one's social network can influence health seeking and delay behaviour(s)	21%	50%	23%	6%	1%
The tutorial developed my evaluation skills in understanding the effectiveness of current interventions and available resources for patients and their families face when adapting to chronic illness, self-management and medical compliance	19%	54%	21%	5%	1%
As a result of this tutorial, I feel confident in identifying available community resources in relation to patients and their family's needs	21%	50%	24%	5%	1%
The tutorial enhanced my understanding in current legislation(s) and community resources in response to primary, secondary and tertiary prevention for chronic conditions and self-management	19%	48%	26%	6%	1%

Table 1- Knowledge and awareness about community resources

Please indicate how much this PCP course improved your following competencies?	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
The interviews had strengthened my ability to use effective communication techniques to converse effectively with patients	20%	60%	16%	3%	1%	
The interviews had strengthened my ability to use effective communication technique to converse with a inter-professional team	21%	54%	19%	5%	1%	
The interviews had established rapport and a trustworthy relationship with patients in the exchange of information regarding their illness experience(s)	25%	52%	18%	4%	1%	
	Completely	A lot	Moderately	Somewhat	A little	Not at all
Adopting the use of empathy and professional ethics in communications with patients	17%	35%	35%	8%	5%	0
Acquiring communication techniques for effective communication with patients	15%	39%	34%	7%	4%	1%

Table 2- Empathic communication competencies

Conclusion

- PCP serves as a valuable platform for pre-clinical students to enhance their empathic communication skills, assess patients' needs.
- The integration of empathy training in medical education, and the understanding of primary care components to enhance population well-being through health promotion, disease prevention, self-care management and supportive care are essential to equip future healthcare professionals with the skills and knowledge needed to deliver compassionate care in the current health care system.



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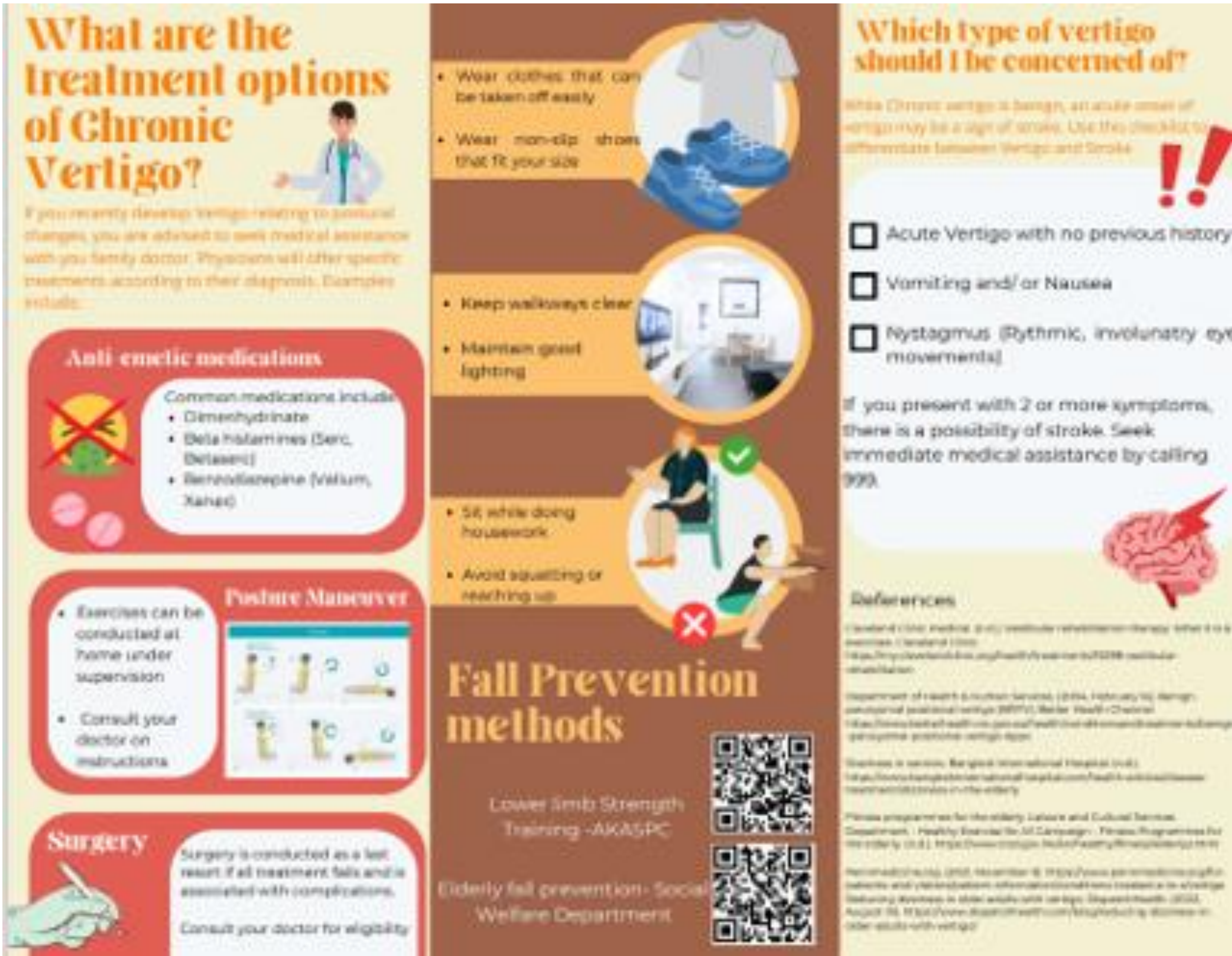


Figure 1- Health prevention and promotion package: leaflet



Figure 2- Health prevention and promotion package: poster