Effects of an Empowerment Program on Self-care Agency for Elders with Hypertension *

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Abstract

Purposes: The objectives of this action research study were to develop an empowerment program to increase self-care agency in elders with uncontrollable hypertension and to examine the effects of the program.

Design: Action research.

Methods: A total of 78 elders with uncontrollable hypertension were recruited using convenience sampling. Exclusion criteria were paralysis, critical heart disease, renal failure, and any condition inhibiting self care. A practice guideline based on Gibson’s process of empowerment was developed for use in the program which consisted of self respect, problem analysis, reflection, goal setting, supportive planning, evaluation and self-care behavior. The subjects joined the empowerment groups 3 times. Data analysis using descriptive statistics and t-test were performed for quantitative data, and content analysis for qualitative data.

Main findings: Elders’ self-care behaviors between pre and post program enrollment were significantly different (p < .05). Blood pressure was significantly decreased after program enrollment (p < .05). Content analysis was revealed that elders were not aware of high blood pressure, lacked of knowledge, and depended on physicians’ orders. After the program, the subjects’ self-care behaviors were positively changed with, for example, increased awareness of diet control and daily exercise, increased participation in elder’s group activities for reducing stress, and consistently self-monitoring in medication use.

Conclusion and recommendations: The use of an empowerment program to develop self-care agency can increase self care behaviors and reduce blood pressure in elders. The program should be applied in primary health care settings to empower the elders for controlling their blood pressure effectively.

Keywords: Development of self-care agency, elders, hypertension, self-care behavior