

Project Title

Equipping and Empowering patients and/or caregivers for self-management of toenails

Project Lead and Members

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Organisation(s) Involved

Tan Tock Seng Hospital, Centre for Allied Health & Pharmacy Excellence (CAPE),
Community Fund

Project Period

Start date: 1/1/2020

Completed date: 31/7/2021

Aims

This project aims to empower suitable patients and their caregivers with the right tools (instrument) and training to empower them to be able to safely manage patients' toenails at home.

This project hopes to reduce patients' visit to the hospital (Podiatry) and increase value to the patient / caregiver by empowering them.

Project Attachment

PROJECT SUMMARY



Thickened and onychomycotic toenails



Inappropriate tools
Inadequate guidance



Long term care
Extended waiting time



**RIGHT TOOLS
+
RIGHT TRAINING
=
PATIENT EMPOWERMENT
& INDEPENDENCE**

Empower safe and independent management



Commercially available instrument that was provided to successful trainees



A Podiatrist delivering personalised coaching of theoretical knowledge



A Caregiver practicing nail cutting skill while being observed by a Podiatrist

Background

Toenail management can be a challenge for both patients and their caregivers when typical retail nail clippers are not adequate to cut through thickened or mildly diseased toenails. If not managed well, it could lead to varying foot complications and pain.

Patients are usually referred to Podiatry for such toenails to be managed and will usually require long term care as patients or caregivers lack the correct tools and training to do this at home.

The majority of patients who are referred to podiatry for routine toenails management lack the correct tools and appropriate guidance to be confident in providing toenail management for the patient at home.

This puts undue stress on the availability of podiatry care as patients typically will not be discharged as toenail management is a long term ongoing care that patients require. Patients will typically need to come for regular podiatry follow-up every 2-6 months. Current caregiver training has not been impactful as they lack the right tools (instruments) that are available in retail. The regular nail clippers have its limitations.

Methods

Trainees were recruited from patients and/or their caregivers attending podiatry outpatient clinics.

A stringent criterion excluded patients with severe nail pathologies or patients at a moderate to high risk of amputation. If the patient was unable to learn how to use the instruments due to functional limitations, their able-bodied caregiver was recruited.

This group of 20 trainees consisting of either patients or their caregivers underwent a comprehensive 6-month training programme with timely assessments to ensure the trainee's proficiency with the instruments. The patient's re-grown toenails were cut for realistic training purposes.

Results

At the end of the programme, >70% of trainees successfully completed training. Surveyed trainees found the course to be manageable, safe and reported high satisfaction

Lessons Learnt

The trainees came from a wide spectrum of educational backgrounds, which did not seem to affect training success rates.

Based on trainees feedback gathered, all respondents were in agreement that the course was manageable, safe, and the nail cutting instruments were easy to use.

They also unanimously agreed that the training content and duration was adequate.

During our training sessions, we realised that some of the self-managing trainees had difficulties with their posturing (e.g. bending down or bringing up their feet to the optimal position) when cutting their own toenails. To address this issue, we found that involving a family member could help improve training success.

Therefore, we conclude that the prudent selection of patient/trainees were the most important factor for training success.

Another respondent also gave feedback that it would be helpful if training materials was not just limited to English language delivery.

Conclusion

This project has shown that it is possible to safely train patients and their caregivers of reasonable functional levels to manage mildly complex toenails on their own. This conferment of empowerment to both patients and their caregivers could be translated to the wider community to ensure the safe management of their toenails, while podiatrists and the health system can focus their resources on more complicated foot pathologies.

Project Category

Workforce Transformation, Care & Process Redesign,

Keywords

Workforce Transformation, Care & Process Redesign, Informal Workforce, Caregiver, Training & Education, Self-Management, Outpatient Care, Podiatry, Tan Tock Seng Hospital, Centre for Allied Health & Pharmacy Excellence, Toenail Management

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