Research Paper

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COPD is basically an incurable and also progressive disease which is basically characterized by the slow progressive and also irreversible airflow obstruction. This disease is basically considered to be a disease of the middle and old age and also it produces disabling symptoms and signs which effect every single aspect of life. COPD is basically an umbrella term which is used to describe progressive lung’s diseases including bronchitis and also non-reversible asthma. Further this disease is characterized by progressive breathlessness. The impact of COPD is quite severe not only on the society but on the individuals also. It has been noted that as compared to angina there are double number of general physicians are present and the cost that is involved in this particular condition is much higher than any other health condition. Although the treatment for COPD is not yet available there are only some medications and also practices in order to reduce the severity of this condition but no general treatments are yet available for treating this particular health condition (Booker, 2006). But having said that there are some precautionary measures which should be taken by the COPD patients in order to feel better and live a normal life and some of the health advices are listed below in this paper (Booker, 2006).

**1: Quit Smoking**

It is a known fact that COPD occurs most frequently in those patients who have smoking problem where quit smoking can be the only way in such patients to reduce the progression of the disease. Although it is true that the lost function of the lungs cannot be recovered but it is also true that by cutting down on the smoking it can reduce the decline rate of the lungs function to that of a nonsmoker. Quit smoking is never too late and all the health professional must encourage their patient in order to quit smoking and feel better. There are certain strategies which must be adopted by the healthcare professionals, nicotine replacement therapy or bupropion along with an active and helpful support can help in maximizing the chances of success of quitting cigarette smoking. Although smoking is said to modify the natural history of COPD but there are many patients for whom quitting smoking is challenging. So while treating these patients they must be encouraged that it is never too late to end smoking and every effort must be made by the healthcare professional in order to encourage such patients. For the patients with COPD quitting smoking can be linked with a slight short term increase in FEV which is evaluated to last for a year or more. It has been proved via various studies that for people who actually want to quit smoking a verbal appreciation or written instruction can be quite useful. It is effective in about 3% of the patients (Perry, 2007).

**2: Managing the Problem of Breathlessness**

Breathlessness is a common symptom of COPD and it sometimes makes the patient quite freaked out and frustrated. This is quite integral to the overall progression of the disease and there are many people who try to control this particular symptoms by effectively changing their life style. There are majority of people who mostly ignore the early symptoms of COPD like early coughing and wheezing and also breathlessness thinking that these might be the symptoms of aging or in some cases due to lack of physical health. Therefore, most of these patients only get help when the symptoms get serious and it cannot be ignored any further. For most of the patients’ breathlessness can be quite scary as it not only make the exercise intolerance worse but at the same time the patient can suffer from social isolation. With the passage of time the health of the patient gets even more serious and they further experience breathlessness while at rest as well as during the activity (Booker, 2006).

Their lifestyle gets even more complicated due to the severity of this condition. Due to the fear of breathlessness patients become afraid of doing any physical activity therefore cardiovascular function and also skeletal muscle mass decline with the passage of time. Lack of fitness leads towards fatigue and also loss of functional independence. Therefore, in case of such patients, they must be referred to the evaluation of suitability for pulmonary rehab which is considered to be a gold standard for patient who have COPD problem. It provides training and also therapy along with the disease’s prevention education. Through various studies it is confirmed that this particular rehabilitation method has improved the exercise tolerance, reduced breathlessness problems and also the bed-day usage reduced to a greater extent. If this facility is not available, then it is important to encourage the patients to do exercise within their comfort zone. Breathlessness used by most of the healthcare providers in order to determine any type of exertion and a scale is further used to assess this. For most of the patients the intensity of the exercise will not be interrupted by breathlessness until the patient experiences some exertions (Booker, 2006).

The healthcare providers can also advice the patients to do short intervals of exercise with some rest in between and as a result the patients can be able to do high intensities of exercise later. They can also be advised to walk regularly to the point where he/she will become breathless and over a period of few weeks the patient should be advice to steadily increase the pace of the exercise. It is shown in studies that by exercising on daily basis the overall sensations of breathlessness can be improved thus producing an improvement in the functional capacity and also the health status. It is the responsibility of the healthcare providers to ensure the patients that breathlessness is not hazardous and it is just unpleasant If in one session they receive advice on how to manage their breathlessness problem it must be reinforced during the follow up sessions (Perry, 2007).

**3: Exercise:**

Exercise is one of the most effective strategy to manage breathlessness and also in the management of COPD as a whole. Therefore, it is better for the COPD patients to maintain a better and increase levels of activity. They should be asked about doing certain physical activities which cause the breathlessness sensations and they should be encouraged to do it again. If for example the patients become breathless they should be advised to do it multiple times. For COPD patients the exercise is a healthy activity that can help them to manage their health condition and it should include simple regimens that must associate with other daily life activities like climbing stairs, walking and cycling. Also the relatives of the patients must allow them to do their things for themselves even if by doing they become breathless. It can help them to maintain their physical activity and also their self-esteem (Booker, 2006).

**4: Nutrition:**

For the COPD patient maintains a healthy diet is a mandatory thing and they should be advised to maintain a healthy diet in order to successfully cope with their overall health condition. Although for most of the people it is quite shocking that what we eat in a day mostly likely affects our breathing. In order to perform all the functions of the body, our body uses the food that we eat so if a person has consumed the right amount of nutrients it means that he/she can breathe easier. It is also important to note that a single food cannot provide all the important nutrients there must be a variety of foods in order to fulfill the nutritional requirements of the body. Hence, for the COPD patients it is very important to come up with a diet plan along with the healthcare professional. To do that it is important to arrange a meeting with a registered dietician nutritionist to get a direction on what to eat. By asking your doctor it is possible to find out a nutritionist who also has a speculation in COPD (Booker, 2006).

It might be surprising for some people to know that breathing requires a lot of energy and for patients who also have COPD this requirement is much higher as compared to the normal humans. In case of COPD patients the muscles that are used in breathing may require 10 times more calories than a person who has no COPD. Therefore, good nutrition is important in the overall process of breathing but it also helps to resist various infections. Chest infection is the major cause of hospitalization in case of COPD patients so it is important to reduce the overall risk of COPD by following a healthy diet plan. The nutritional requirements of people are different according to their health conditions so it is very important to figure out other’s health related issues. For example, if a person is overweight and has a problem of COPD then the lungs and the heart has to work extra harder making the process of breathing even more difficult, additionally the extra weight of the individual might demand more oxygen. Therefore, it is important for such individuals to limit daily calories along with exercising. In contrast for underweight people, they might feel weak and also tired which ultimately increases the chances of an infection. Hence, in such people it is very important to consume enough calories to produce energy in order to stay away from any possible infection. Moreover, it is very important for such patients to monitor their weight once in a week and if it is recommended from the doctor then monitor it twice a day (“Diet and Nutrition for Energy with COPD,” n.d.).

Drinking a lot of water also helps in the management of COPD, it is recommendable to consume 5 to 8 glasses of water each day and it should be make sure that the fluid is non-caffeinated the patients must be advised to consume more water and green tea so that not only their body will stay hydrated but at the same time they will be able to strengthen their immune system. However, doctor’s advice is necessary in every case because people who have heart problems may need to limit their liquid consumption. High fiber food like vegetables, fruits, dried peas and also beans are useful for COPD patients. As fiber is an indigestible part of the plant body so it helps to move the food in the digestive tract as a result the blood sugar is maintained and also the cholesterol level in the body is reduced (“Nutrition and COPD,” n.d.).

**Nutritional Guidelines**:

Choosing the right nutritional guidelines is very crucial for COPD patients, choosing complex carbohydrate is beneficial for such patients and if the patient is underweight eating whole-grain carbohydrates and also fresh fruits is quite helpful and if the person is overweight then eating fresh fruits and vegetables can help the patients not only in reducing weight but also coping with the disease. Additionally, the patient needs to limit the use of simple carbohydrates like candies and sugar along with soft drinks. The COPD patients must choose mono and poly unsaturated fats which do not have cholesterol. Such fats often belong to the plant sources and they are liquid at room temperature like canola and corn oils. There are certain foods like butter, fats and skin from the meat and also fried foods these are the saturated foods which can have harmful effects on the overall health of the individual so the consumption of such food must be limited by the person in order to reduce the complexities of this particular disease (“Nutrition and COPD,” n.d.).

**5: Exacerbations:**

Exacerbations in case of COPD can be disturbing experience for the patients, it has been noted that the effect of exacerbations can last longer even for a period of four months. If the exacerbations are quite frequent then they not only increase the progression of the disease but at the same time it can impact the quality of life of the individual. Therefore, the patent must be advice on how to avoid exacerbations and how to manage them in case these occur. It is important to mention that all the patients of COPD must be vaccinated against influenza and also pneumococcal pneumonia. Common colds are causes of exacerbations of COPD and mostly there are difficult to avoid, therefore the patients must be advised to tell their friends and family not to visit them quite often if they are having cold. To increase the immunity of these patients it is important to take care of the nutrition and also enough heating. The patient should be told not to go out when it is cold or when the air quality is not good. The patient should be advised practically without being too restrictive or harsh. In order to remain socially active, the patient must be able to live normally (Perry, 2007).

**Conclusion:**

Although at present time there is not proper treatment for COPD and the available treatments are used to reduce the progression of disease. Therefore, the role of practiced nurses is very crucial and important for the COPD patients because they know better that when sand how to seek help in case of an emergency. By effectively identifying the signs of deterioration it is possible to seek for early medical help which can further be helpful in avoiding the need of hospitalizations. If the total number of diagnosis of COPD patients will increase, then there will also be a rise to the need of advice and information. Hence, practice nurses can be vital in this case with patients who not only struggle with the disease but also suffer on daily basis.

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