Self-management in COPD Patients

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**Introduction**

A chronic condition can be defined as the condition of human health that is long-lasting. Typically this term is applied to a disease that lasts for three months or more. In Australia, more than 47.3% of Australians had none or more than one chronic condition. Specifically, discussing the chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases (COPD), it is a chronic lungs diseases that is an umbrella term used to incorporate several diseases related to the lungs (Mannino & Buist, 2007). These diseases are chronic bronchitis and asthma. In Australia, COPD is the 5th leading cause of death and almost 1.5 million people are affected by this illness. Living with a chronic illness poses several challenges for a person in daily life (Erbas & Abramson, 2012). As COPD patients have to consider various external environmental factors as well while struggling with their illness. Also, the community is another factor that they have in incorporate with their illness. It is, therefore, necessary to take guidance from a professional healthcare official so that their illness can be cured. As these healthcare professionals will provide several self-management guidance that will help a person to manage the illness easily. This paper will provide a detailed description of COPD that includes its potential causes and pathophysiology. Also, various self-management techniques will be discussed that will help a person to manage COPD while incorporating external factors and community.

**Body**

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a chronic lung disease that incorporates bronchitis and emphysema. In this disease, the tubes known as airways that carry air in and out of lungs are blocked due to inflammation or mucus. This airflow obstruction makes it difficult for a person to breathe. Additionally, air sacs known as alveoli that are located at the end of airways became less flexible. Also, in people having COPD the wall present between air sacs gets damaged causing severe difficulty in breathing. Besides the difficulty in breathing several other symptoms of COPD include chest tightness, wheezing, respiratory infections and blueness of lips (Rodriguez, 2000). Typically, tobacco smoking is considered to be the major reason for COPD. However, in most of the developing countries, many people that are exposed to fumes caused during smoking or burning fuel also experience COPD. However, in rare cases, genes may be responsible for posing an increased risk for COPD. AS people who lack alpha 1 which is a kind of protein are more likely to have COPD. When not treaded effectively COPD can cause severe complications such as heart problems, lung cancer, and respiratory infections.

Due to the increase in pollution and other environmental issues, it is very difficult for people having COPD to live their life normally. This disease has a great impact not only on the people that have COPD but also family members. As due to breathing issues an individual having COPD is not able to engage in physical activities. Even moderate physical activity can worsen their condition. This lack of activity results in obesity that may lead to several cardiovascular diseases. Also, a person having COPD cannot join a gathering where people are smoking as fumes from smoking can make their condition worse. Thus, due to severe difficulties people having COPD are more vulnerable to depression. It is, therefore necessary for the people COPD take help from healthcare professionals so that they can also lead their life normally (Effing & Palen, 2012). Several interventions can help in reducing the severity of symptoms in people having COPD.

Having a chronic illness causes lots of issues that need to be addressed urgently. It is, therefore important that patients with chronic illness should learn self-management techniques so that in case of an emergency they can at least provide first aid to themselves. Specifically, discussing patients having COPD many self-management techniques may help them combat the disease. (Bourbeau & Palen, 2009). Most of the people especially chain smokers are not aware that they have COPD and consider it as a complex chest infection. Due to the late diagnosis, it is very difficult to treat the diseases and the patient may lose life as well. Despite regular hospital visits, people should be aware of how to take care of themselves as the majority of the time they cannot access physician and therefore self-manage. (Pinnock & Jordan, 2016).

To support the self-management in my client I will first analyze the symptoms of the patient thoroughly. This will help in a clear understanding of the current condition of a person. Secondly, I will help my patient devise a plan on which he or she must act to reduce the severity of the diseases. It is mandatory to set up a regular visit to the physician so that he can assess the condition and prescribe the medicines accordingly. Also, COPD patients should arrange a meeting with community nurses and pharmacists to ensure that they are using the correct amount of medicine as well as using inhalers correctly. Patients having COPD must have nebulizer and inhalers at their home so that they can access them when necessary.

The most crucial step in promoting self-management among patients is to educate them regarding the importance of self-management. It is, therefore, necessary that a community-based awareness program should be organized regularly that help people in understanding the symptoms and causes of COPD. Additionally, this awareness program must help COPD patients to learn several prevention techniques such as quitting smoking and drinking, etc. so that they can reduce the seriousness of the disease. Also, with providing awareness, lungs diseases management skills should be taught to the patients as well. These techniques can be taught online as well as in several support groups that are made specifically for facilitating COPD patients. Furthermore, in every community there are several pulmonary rehabilitation centres available to facilitate patients with COPD. These centres not only educate people but also devise an exercise program that may help in the conservation of energy among COPD patients by doing various breathing exercises. I will recommend my client to visit these centres as well.

Another important thing is to maintain a diet plan. As a balanced diet might not cure the diseases but can help the body fight off the severity of the disease. To reduce the production of carbon dioxide it is recommended to reduce carbohydrates intake. However, complex carbohydrates such as oats, barley and potatoes with skin, etc can improve the digestive system that will in turn help in managing the blood sugar level. As COPD is a lung disease it is important to incorporate foods that are rich in potassium such as green leafy vegetables, oranges, avocadoes and oranges, etc. As potassium vital for the better functioning of the lungs. In contrast, several foods need to be avoided such as salt, dairy products, fried foods and vegetables such as beans, cauliflower and corn, etc (“COPD Diet: 5 Expert Tips on What to Eat,” n.d.).

This diet chart will help the patient in maintaining a healthy lifestyle that will help in reducing disease severity.

It is often observed that people with COPD are less involved in physical activities due to the illness that may lead them to obesity. However, certain exercises such as aerobics training and cardiovascular training not only help them indulge in physical activities but also helps them to manage breathing issues caused by COPD. Besides, these exercises patients with COPD can also learn pursed-lip breathing technique that helps in removing the trapped air out from the lungs thus easing breathing (Effing & Palen, 2012).

Due to the rise in technology, most of the people busy using cellphone and tablets. A telephone-based health coaching delivered by a professional nurse can help patients a lot especially in the time of urgency. COPD exacerbation is a phenomenon in which an infection can cause serious lung damage and difficulty in breathing. In these circumstances, telephone-based health coaching helps a lot as this will improve patient’s confidence in determining an exacerbation early that will, in turn, make him or her use rescue drugs immediately to avoid further complexities (Jolly & Jowett, 2018). Additionally, the rise in the use of social media several sites can help the patients with COPD. COPD-web can help patients a lot as this site works two ways. One is directed to COPD patients while one at healthcare professionals. The website contains several pictures, films and documentaries of procedures that can be done to reduce COPD severity. Also, this will help patients to properly use inhalers and nebulizers (Nyberg & Tistad, 2017).

The COPD patients that are chain smoker or smoke more often can increase their risk of getting respiratory infections that may worsen their illness. For these patients, it is the first step to spread awareness among them regarding the hazards of smoking so that they can quit it. As chain smokers are habitual of smoking it is recommended that these patients should get therapies such as nicotine replacement therapy so that they can gradually quit smoking. Another factor that also worsens the symptoms of COPD is a Seasonal infection. Therefore, it is highly important to promote the culture of vaccination and anti-viral injections or medicines. A Patient should make a chart or put a reminder on a cell phone to register all the dates of vaccination so that COPD patients can get influenza and pneumococcal vaccine to avoid getting these infections (Bischoff & Bourbeau, 2011).

People with COPD often experience anxiety and depression. For this purpose, I will recommend my client a cognitive behavioural therapy. This therapy helps in treating several panic disorders. Community nurses can help counselling patients by visiting their homes and treat them several techniques so that they can self-manage when they came across a panic attack. Also, referring to a support group is beneficial as these groups help patients learn various self-management techniques (Dowson & Mulder, 2004).

**Conclusion**

According to the statistics of 2017-2018, one in the nine people living in Australia has a chronic illness. Specifically discussing chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), more than 1.5 million in Australia have this disease. Living a chronic illness of any kind can pose several difficulties in one’s life especially people having COPD face lots of challenges in their daily life. Several external environmental factors directly affect COPD patients. For instance seasonal viral infections, pollution and seasonal pneumonia etc. Due to this reason, people having COPD must know about the self-management techniques that could help them in managing their illness. Although, regularly scheduled visits to the physician are important yet there are many times when healthcare professionals are not easily accessible and in these circumstances, if a person knows self-management techniques he or she can at least provide themselves with first aid that could as a lifesaver. This paper discussed several self-management techniques that may help COPD patient a lot. However, these techniques will only help if people follow them with consistency and act accordingly.

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