

The Meritorious Audio Environment for Home-Treatment Patients in Chiang Rak Noi Sub-District, Thailand

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Abstract

This paper is to study the problems and causes of home-treatment patients in Chiang Rak Noi sub-district, Ayutthaya province and to study the meritorious audio environment (MAE) in Buddhism for developing well-being of home treatment patients. A qualitative methodology was applied to this research. The in-depth interview was conducted with patients and caregivers at 6 households to find out the causes and the problems of home-treatment patients and the effect of MAE on their well-being. They were asked to discuss on how meritorious audio environment affect your health and whether they think the meritorious audio help develop the well-being of home treatment patients. The research results revealed that MAE has a positive effect on the well-being of patients such as reduced stress levels, feeling calmer and more relaxed, being more mindful and feeling happy.

Keywords: Home-treatment patients, Meritorious Audio Environment, Dhamma

Introduction

Some patients are faced with a situation that requires them to continue their treatment at home, also known as a home-treatment patient - one who has to stay at home and cannot help themselves to do daily activities such as eating, taking medicine, cleaning their bodies, etc. These home-treatment patients require someone to take care and help them to do tasks by a caregiver or a healthcare professional. Prior experience and education are sometimes needed to attend to the patient as emotional disorders may incur during their time at home. In some cases, patients may become aggressive and are unable to control themselves, with negative emotions such as anger and depression towards the caregiver. In serious cases, they may want to commit suicide or hurt themselves.

The quality of care and patient's experience may be improved by stimulating a meritorious environment in the comfort of their homes which may potentially reduce and prevent adverse health events. If performed properly, the benefits of home care may

include reduction and prevent adverse health events, closure of care gaps from enhanced care, lower-cost site of care, and increased convenience.

Specifically, the benefits of home care can be separated into two brackets - psychological and economic benefits. Such benefits include more independence for patients and caregivers, increased confidence and feelings of self-worth, fewer feelings of being helpless, day to day living being less interrupted by home therapy than visits to a hospital or doctor's office, and less time spent traveling to or waiting in medical buildings. Economically, patients incur lower medical costs due to fewer overnight stays at the hospital and early treatment detection by a caregiver or healthcare professional may result in additional savings financially and psychologically which could help the life of the patient. This will also be beneficial for the community and decrease the burden of the family budget and government in the future looking after the home-treatment patients.

However, there are possible problems associated with home care such as the patients may over rely on the caregiver and health professional which the quality of care depends heavily on the ability of the caregiver and health professional. Health treatment is not as regulated and accounted for compared to treatment at a hospital meaning the patient may be treated too often or not often enough. Family members can be hurt if they handle blood, needles, or syringes in an unsafe way, storing medicine incorrectly can be hazardous too.

A meritorious audio environment refers to the audio environment which is developed through listening to The Buddha's doctrines such as Dhamma chanting, Dhamma songs, and activities in Buddhism. The objective of the research is to study the problems and causes of home-treatment patients in Chiang Rak Noi sub-district, Ayutthaya province and to study the meritorious audio environment (MAE) in Buddhism for developing well-being of home treatment patients. By developing a meritorious audio environment, the research aims to examine an environment that is beneficial for the patient and community.

The research realizes the importance of the method to create a meritorious environment in home-treatment patients and families by the Buddha's doctrine. So, the methods used will include a Dhamma radio, an audio media with an SD card player loaded with Dhamma talks and music and a Dhamma online broadcast link which is accessible for the patient and family to listen to Dhamma talks online to create merit and have the Dhamma of Buddha as a refuge.

Literature review

In the research, Dhamma SD card player had been utilized to build a meritorious audio environment (MAE) for home treatment patients which yielded positive mental and

physical benefits to all the home-treatment patients. The patients were satisfied with the Dhamma SD card player and experienced improvement to their patience and brought better well-being to all the participants. This literature review examines the meritorious audio environment for home-treatment patients in Chiang Rak Noi Sub-District, Thailand. It discusses the implementation of MAE and the changes in health of the patients.

While there has been research regarding using music as a form of therapy (Hosseini, E. & Hosseini, S. 2019), using music as a supplementary method to treat home-treatment patients in Thailand is still scarce. As culture and social needs may differ amongst countries, health and mental well being issues are still prevalent regardless of country. In the rural areas of Thailand, Chiang Rak Noi sub-district was selected as a sample area. The MAE model was used to collect data from home-treatment patients from 6 households in this sub-district. The data showed improvements in home-patients spiritually and physically. All patients felt more encouraged, cared and physically looked happier through the discussions and feelings shared in the interviews. Furthermore, their health conditions improved, ranging from lower sugar levels and increased mobility.

According to the study of Agres et al. (2021), music therapy is crucial for patients who have stress and mental health issues. Maddock et al. (2001) However, there was a limitation during COVID-19 pandemic due to the lockdown and social distancing. Thus, the technology, such as phone calls, e-meeting and online courses has been applied with a music therapy (MT).

The research by Brown, K.W., & Ryan, R.M. (2003), explains that meditation and practicing mindfulness promotes well-being. Using the theory of Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS), measures the differences between mindful practitioners and others. Therefore with enhanced self-awareness we understand that one's mental health condition improved due to the increased mindfulness. Lindsay, E. (2018) To acknowledge the situation and therefore was able to mentally let go of the pain and thoughts that the home-treatment patients were experiencing through using MAE and Dhamma materials. By creating a physically positive and calmer environment, the positive emotions diffused to the home-treatment where they felt calmer. Therefore it is crucial that the physical environment of the room is also considered so that the ambience supports the patient. Hence the ambience and atmosphere that is proper and is supportive for a learning environment Hung-Chang, L., et al. (2015) must be considered when implementing the MAE.

Patients receiving home therapy benefit from a good aural environment. It is essential to provide the patients with a quiet and tranquil atmosphere, both physically and emotionally. A Dhamma radio with Dhamma talks, chanting and music helps alleviate mental illnesses, which according to McCaffrey et al. (2011), makes the patient feel more

positive and gives them a better mindset in coping with their symptoms and treatment. This is especially helpful for bedridden or disabled home-treatment patients who are unable to access a health professional or visit Buddhist temples to seek mental advice due to physical restraints. The convenience and affordability of providing MAE as a treatment or therapy to the homes of the patient has proven effective. It addresses the physical issues home-treatment patients face regarding immobility, motivation and accessibility. However, it is crucial that the knowledge of MAE is transferred to the caregivers and medical staff so they have the adequate tools they need to fulfill their duties and provide patients receiving home therapy the best care possible. The importance of future research may be required to monitor the developments in the home-treatment patients' conditions as well as the maintenance and updates of MAE, human resources and management of a system or tracking method that records the progress of the households would suggest a more intricate and seamless process.

Methodology

In depth interviews for examining the results of using a Dhamma SD card player for a meritorious audio environment for home-treatment patients were used in this study. Interviewees were patients and caregivers from six home-treatment patients households. They were interviewed for 15 minutes per person. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. The interview questions were used in order to understand the cause of having home treatment and their perspectives using a Dhamma SD card player for the meritorious audio environment. The Dhamma SD card consists of Dhamma Stories, Dhamma talks, Dhamma chants and Dhamma Music.

Results

The causes of home treatment are not exactly the same among the household. However, the patients have a similar problem in moving their bodies. They need caregivers to take care of them.

House number 1

The home-treatment patient has been suffering from Osteoarthritis which has made her unable to walk. She also has high blood pressure and a skin problem that makes her whole body and head itchy throughout the day. However, the doctor says that there is nothing wrong with it and has given a cream to apply to my skin for relief. Presently, she is unable to walk and has to sit still. When there was nobody to help her go to the toilet, she had to crawl. Osteoarthritis began as a normal sore, but after she went to the temple for Dhamma practice, she couldn't walk and someone had to hold her hand for assistance.

Gradually, she couldn't walk back home and had to seek medical attention at home as she couldn't go to the doctor.

House number 2

The home-treatment patient has depression, Bedridden. The doctor has examined the causes, which were found to be aphasia. The patient didn't want to move her body and felt unmotivated to do anything. Her leg may not be able to be stretched out.

House number 3

The home-treatment patient has had diabetes for over 10 years as well as high blood pressure and kidney disease. She also experiences tinnitus and has difficulty hearing. She is currently on medication. She is stressed because one of her children mortgaged her land and another daughter recently passed away.

House number 4

The home-treatment patient has had a myocardial infarction. At first, the caregiver who is her daughter noticed that her mother's mouth was crooked and she took her to the hospital. Her mother was admitted and, on that night, she was unable to walk. She stayed in Bangkok for 3 months to receive treatment, then returned home for physiotherapy. Despite having two successful rounds of physiotherapy, she was unable to walk again on the third attempt due to her age and her brain's inability to send proper signals for walking. This happened during the Buddhist Lent period, which followed the year when she last walked. The home-treatment patient's husband passed away about a year ago. Her condition worsened, although she didn't seem to realize it. Her caregiver thinks it may have to do with the home-treatment patient and her siblings having a similar illness. The patient's husband had Alzheimer's. After he retired, he couldn't remember his children and was unable to walk. Before that her husband had remarried, and the home-treatment patient was very sad during that time. She felt very resentful, but due to her illness, she cannot remember that story and her children. Instead, she refers to us as her elder brother. At the moment, the municipality has been helping us with adult nappies because I used to work as S.P, but her caregiver quit her job during the time the home-treatment patient was sick. Thus, three children of the caregivers have been supporting me. However, the home-treatment patient's children also support the caregiver by buying nappies for the home-treatment patient because the caregiver doesn't have income at all.

House number 5

The home-treatment patient has been suffering from lung cancer for over a year now, since last November. It started after I had the Sinovac and AstraZeneca Covid vaccinations, and then cancer appeared. She couldn't breathe and had a fever after the second vaccine shot.

House number 6

The home-treatment patient hasn't been able to see since 2004, because he suffers from Diabetic Retinopathy. He is in a wheelchair because his leg was amputated due to diabetes and it became infected from his cat in 2024. Homeless cats often come to his place. He is 72 years old now, and he uses a cane to help me get around and to use the toilet. The sanitation department gave him a wheelchair, but he returned it as it wasn't convenient for him.

The result revealed that meritorious audio helps develop the well-being of home treatment patients.

For House#1, The caregiver plays the Dhamma SD card player for the patient every evening and before she sleeps. Initially, she had trouble sleeping, but now she can sleep very well. However, she still experiences some itching.

For House #2, it has improved the patient's health and mental well-being, making her feel happier. The patient can communicate more, move her body, and respond. The patient has gained more encouragement. For the patient, their response may not be clear due to the severity of their mother's condition. However, the daughter has gained a lot of Dhamma, from her stress in daily life, and now Dhamma has helped her relax and find inner peace. As she herself finds solace and calm, it has a positive impact on the care she provides for her mother. This reduced anxiety for them. The caregiver said "when listening to Dhamma teachings on the radio, it helps alleviate their stress, leading to better lives, reduced stress levels, and improved overall health."

For House#3, Dhamma radio greatly helps improve the quality of life for patients who stay at home. When there is no one around, Dhamma radio serves as a companion and a friend for the patient. When she listens to Dhamma songs, it takes care of her emotional well-being. MAE helps the patient become calmer and more relaxed.

For House#4, For the patient, their response may not be clear due to the severity of their mother's condition. However, the daughter has gained a lot of Dhamma, from her stress in daily life, and now Dhamma has helped her relax and find inner peace. As she herself feels relaxed and calm, it has a positive impact on the care she provides for her mother. This reduced anxiety for them. The caregiver said "My mind has developed better, and I can use Dhamma to advise others, especially my daughter. Our quality of life has improved, and we're able to discuss more things. I would like my daughter to follow Dhamma teachings as well. I also give advice to my friends, and we have no arguments because we become more mindful" For House#5, the patient said "Practicing Dhamma has improved my life. By doing only good things, I am able to let go of things. When my mind becomes good, I see everything as good. I have a better understanding and I am more mindful." For House#6, The patient said "My life is better, I feel light, happy, without suffering, and not stressed as I understand blindness is a result of Karma."

Moreover, the results showed that MAE affects the body and mind positively. The examples are as follows.

For House#1, Dhamma has a positive impact on both the body and mind, not only for ourselves but also for our families. It helps us avoid committing sins and refraining from killing small creatures, bringing us merits.

For House#2, the patient can move her body more, and acknowledge the Dhamma from the Dhamma radio.

For House#3, The Dhamma radio benefits both physical health and mental well-being. It improves the well-being of mind and provides encouragement. In terms of the body, it helps increase energy levels and facilitates walking exercise. The patient is able to walk and visit her relatives, although she cannot walk long distances, Nevertheless, her health has improved.

For House#5, it improves physical well-being, reduces excessive thinking, calms, eliminates restlessness, strengthens the body, promotes positive thinking, tranquility of the mind, and prevents continuous wandering thoughts.

Discussion

All the participants who received the Dhamma SD card player felt more satisfied upon listening to the audio. Their mental well-being improved in terms of happiness and they were able to be more mindful because they were able to let go of the suffering and unwholesome emotions that attached to their mind through the teachings of the Dhamma. As the Dhamma SD card player “helps to improve our physical health, refine our minds, and make us happier. From being impatient to becoming calmer.” The selected audio soothes the patient by providing encouragement and melody that is calm and relaxing which has a positive effect on the patient, resulting in improved physical health conditions too.

Moreover, in one case study, the patient’s sugar levels were lowered due to an improved mental well-being. By listening to the Dhamma radio and practicing meditation at home, it lifted his mind and surprisingly helped him improve his diabetic condition. Now he is able to wake up early in the morning to prepare food offerings to monks as a form of building merit.

Thus we cannot exclude the limitation of monitoring the sustainability of ensuring patients are continuously practicing and listening to the Dhamma talks and music as they may forget to practice or may feel demotivated to continue with the meritorious audio environment if there was no follow up or patient visit to monitor their progress. Therefore the variables in this research are limited to the behavior of the patients in the long term

and how their condition may improve or worsen overtime may need to be examined further.

The next steps to take may be to change the audio files and standardize the results with a quantitative approach to present data and findings in a more detailed manner. Moreover, a follow up research could be done to analyze the sample group over a longer period of time, use a more quantitative scaling approach Pimthong, S et al (2022) to collect more data and see the changes in behavior and health conditions to provide a stronger argument and recommendation.

Nevertheless, with the limitations of this research, the findings have shown many benefits and health improvements amongst the sample group and how a meritorious audio environment coupled with dhamma talks and audio improves the mental and physical health conditions of home-treatment patients.

Conclusion

A meritorious audio environment is beneficial for home-treatment patients. It is imperative in creating a relaxed and calm environment mentally and physically for the patients. With bed ridden or disabled home-treatment patients unable to seek mental advice or access to a Buddhist temple due to physical restraints, a Dhamma radio equipped with Dhamma talks and music helps alleviate mental illnesses which makes the patient feel more positive and gives them a better mindset in coping with their symptoms and treatment. In most cases, certain health conditions improved and healed completely. It is important to continue to assist caregivers and health professionals with the right tools to perform their role in providing the best health care for the home-treatment patients.

If we cannot continue to support those in need and require attention both mentally and physically, more attention and effort needs to be provided to educate and assist the caregivers and health professionals to maintain and improve standards in the district of Chiang-Rak Noi, Ayutthaya, Thailand.

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