A study on the Linguistic and Functional Health Literacy and Chronic Disease Information

Eun-Jung Lee[a], Myonghwa Park[b]

[a]Dongsan Medical Center, Keimyung University, Republic of Korea
[b]College of Nursing, Keimyung University, Republic of Korea

Abstract and Objective

Health literacy is one of major health issues in developing health education material and program The purposes of this study are to identify health literacy of the persons with chronic disease, to identify disease knowledge depending on a health literacy level, and to verify the correlation between them. Over 200 patients with hypertension or diabetics at a tertiary hospital were participated in the study. The survey was conducted using REALM (Rapid Estimate of Adult Literacy in Medicine) and S-TOFHLA (Short Test of Functional Health Literacy in Adults) as health literacy measurement tools, and disease knowledge measurement tools. The findings indicated that the health education and health care information need to be tailored according to the target user's health literacy and disease knowledge.

Keywords:
Health literacy, Chronic disease, Information

Introduction

Limited health literacy is one of the major barriers of patients in understanding and acting upon health information. Health literacy is the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions [1].

The purposes of this study are to identify health literacy of the persons with chronic disease, to identify disease knowledge depending on a health literacy level, and to verify the correlation between them.

Methods

The subject of this study is 204 adult patients with hypertension or diabetics at a tertiary hospital located in urban area. Data were collected using REALM (Rapid Estimate of Adult Literacy in Medicine) developed by Davis et al. (1993) and S-TOFHLA (Short Test of Functional Health Literacy in Adults) developed by Baker et al. (1999) as health literacy measurement tools. Disease knowledge measurement tools used were Park's (1994) hypertension knowledge measurement tool and Cheon's (2006) diabetes knowledge measurement tool. SPSS WIN 14.0 program was also used for analysis in terms of frequency, percentage, average and standard error, t-test, x^2-test, ANOVA, and Pearson's correlation coefficient.

Results

1. The linguistic health literacy was highly correlated with education level of the subjects. In the functional health literacy, the percentage of correct answers in medicine taking and medical appointment was low compared to other items.

2. The health literacy showed significant differences according to the general characteristics of the subjects such as age, education level, employment status, financial status, and whether living together or not with family.

3. The knowledge of chronic diseases was significantly different depending on age and sex. The older is the lower knowledge of disease. The female patients had lower knowledge of disease compared to that of the male patients.

4. Chronic disease knowledge and linguistic health literacy had a significant positive correlation and functional health literacy also had a significant positive correlation with chronic disease knowledge.

Conclusion

The findings indicate that the health literacy of those who have chronic illness such as hypertension and diabetes was pretty low. The higher health literacy was the higher disease knowledge they have. The disease knowledge has a significant correlation with health literacy. These findings implied that the health education needs to be tailored according to the target user's health literacy and disease knowledge.

References

[1] Sudore RL. Mehta KM, Simonsick EM, Harris TB, Newman AB, & Satterfield S., et al. Limited literacy in older people and disparities in health and healthcare access. Journal of Geriatric Society. 2006; 54(5): 770-776.