CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A correlational descriptive study was conducted to describe social support and burden and to ascertain the relationship between the two variables among Chinese stroke patient caregivers. Fifty stroke patient caregivers attending at Outpatient Department in Xiangya Hospital of Hunan Medical University, China were recruited in this study. PRQ-85 part 2, the Burden Scale, Demographic Data Recording Form were used to collect data of demographic information and study variables. This chapter presents conclusions of the findings, implications, and recommendations for further nursing research.

Conclusions

The conclusions based on the findings of this study were as following:

1. The Chinese stroke patient caregivers perceived moderate level of social support.

2. The Chinese stroke patient caregivers rated their objective burden at high level, while they perceived subjective burden at moderate level.

3. There was a significantly negative relationship between social support and burden of Chinese stroke patient caregivers. Furthermore, social support was significantly negative associated with total burden and subjective burden but not with objective burden.

Implications of the findings

Implications for nursing practice

The findings of this study are helpful to nursing practice because they give credibility to plan intervention strategies. To deal effectively with the impact of stroke on caregivers, it suggested that nurse should assess the stroke patient caregiver burden and the degree to which support is perceived. Following implication according to the findings were:

1. Since social support was negatively associated with burden of stroke patient caregivers, the nurse should plan appropriate care for caregivers to enhance social support and to alleviate their burden. Nurse can be supportive to both caregivers and patients to maintain or strengthen their social network by assisting them to identify their own social context and making referrals to additional resources as necessary. Nurse also need to help caregivers identify strategies to get more support when they perceived themselves as not received this kind of support

they need.

2. Social support was significantly and negatively related to the subjective burden. Therefore, effective interventions to alleviate caregivers' subjective burden by enhancing social support should be implemented. Nurse and other health personnel can be major sources of social support. Nurse interventions should emphasize on psychosocial care and informational education including counseling or teaching, empathy, encouragement and actively listening. Also for the caregiver, support group can be initiated and facilitated by nurses.

Implications for nursing education

Findings of this study provided implication for nursing instructors and students to emphasize the role of social factors such as social support in affecting burden of stroke patients' caregivers. Nursing content should not only address the nursing care to the patient, but also emphasize appropriate nursing care to the caregivers to reduce long-term burden of caregiving for the stroke patients in the community.

Implications for nursing administration

The nursing managers will be supportive to both caregivers and stroke patients to strengthen the social network and enhance social support by setting up home care program for the nurses including psychoeducational program,

long-term counseling, and so on.

Implications for nursing knowledge development

Findings of this study can be used as a database to broaden the body of knowledge for nursing. The results from this study add more knowledge and information of caring for stroke patients and caregivers. The credible information about social support and burden of stroke patient caregivers from this study fills in the gaps of nursing knowledge in China since the information about the two variables was not addressed before.

Limitation of the study

Since this study was conducted in a purposively selected sample of 50 stroke patients caregivers at Outpatient Department in Xiangya Hospital of Hunan Medical University, China, and sample size was relative small, these subjects could not represent all Chinese stroke patient caregivers well. The potential of sampling bias should be considered and generalization of the results was limited.

Recommendations for further study.

For future research, several recommendations need to considered as follows:

1. Since this study sample was relative small, replication of this study with a larger sample size in a

relatively longer period and randomly selected sample of stroke patient caregivers from various hospitals or from various communities in China is need, so that the findings can be generalized to the whole population.

2. Studies utilizing experimental designs are needed to explore the effects of nursing interventions to enhance the social support and to reduce the burden of stroke patient caregivers.

3. Since the relationship between social support and each dimension of burden is not known, further study to identify the relationship between these variables is recommended.