

A Brief Analysis of How to Handle Students' Sudden Illness Emergencies from the Perspective of College Counselors

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Abstract: In recent years, there have been sudden onsets of serious illnesses among college students. How to cope with the sudden illness emergencies has become an important research topic for the college counselors working in the first line of student management. This paper, through a case analysis, discusses the specific measures taken in prevention and treatment of sudden illnesses among students from the perspective of college counselors.

1. Introduction

With the expansion of college enrolment, the number of students studying in colleges keeps rising. In addition, some students do not adjust well to the new living or learning way at college, and such maladjustment tends to cause their mental or physical diseases[1]. Therefore, in recent years, the incidence of sudden illness emergency at college is on the rise. In the event of sudden illness among college students, proper measures should be taken immediately to deal with the emergent situation. If not properly handled, the emergency will leave irreparable harm to the student, the family, the college and the society.

College counselors are the backbone force engaged in moral education of college students, as well as in the guidance of their healthy growths. Because of their own responsibilities and job advantages, they play the role of shock troops and forerunners in the crisis management of campus emergencies[2]. For the past several years, as a college counselor working at the front line of student management, the author has encountered several different types of student sudden illness, such as a sudden onset of epilepsy in a student in class, that of cerebral hemorrhage in a student at midnight, etc. Since most college students are studying far away from home, counselors play a very important role in coping with student illness emergencies. This article, through case analysis, explores the measures taken in the prevention and treatment of student sudden illness from the perspective of the college counselor, with the purpose of providing references for handling similar unexpected events among college students.

2. A Case Study

One day in May, 2016, at 1 o'clock in the morning, Xiaozhang, a student majoring in electrical engineering from XX College suddenly got dizziness and nausea, and after about half an hour, appeared to be in a very dangerous state of convulsion, coma and other abnormal symptoms. After being informed about the critical situation, the counselor immediately contacted the school infirmary, called 120, and at the same time hurriedly arrived at the scene. According to the clinical diagnosis, Xiaozhang was suffering a sudden cerebral hemorrhage caused by cerebral vascular malformations, and was in need of an immediate surgery. As required by the regulations of the

hospital, the patient's parents must sign the risk contract before the operation is performed. But the parents far away at home could not arrive at the hospital until at least 12 hours later. In line with the principle of "saving lives above all else", the counselor signed the risk contract in place of the parents after being authorized by the parents through telephone. The operation was performed successfully, and after a month's of hospitalization, the patient's health significantly improved. Then following the doctor's instruction, Xiaozhang left hospital for home to have a longer period of rest, until he totally recovered about one year later.

The above case highlights the characteristics of abruptness and emergency of onsets of serious illness among college students, and also indicates the important role the counselor plays in handling the onset of students' sudden illness.

3. Causes and Characteristics of Student Illness Emergency

For a counselor to effectively deal with illness emergencies, the first step is to understand the causes and characteristics of the onsets of sudden illness among college students.

A sudden illness emergency refers to a dangerous situation where a serious illness unexpectedly occurs to a student and may cause casualties or threaten the student's physical and mental health, and the illness is in urgent need of immediate relief and treatment"[3]. Such sudden illness emergency may be caused by various natural or man-made factors, two of which cannot be ignored. One factor is that some college students are weak in self-control and self-management. They sleep late, have an unhealthy diet, neglect physical exercises, and all of these habits may lead to a decline in their mental or physical health. In addition, they know little about the prevention of serious illness, so it is no surprise that some students tend to suffer onsets of serious illness. Taking the student mentioned in the above case as an example, he often stayed up late at night, which possibly was one cause of his sudden onset of cerebral hemorrhage. Another factor is that some students with previous health problems may face sudden illness due to some environmental or man-made factors. For example, some students with a medical history choose to conceal their physical conditions from the college to "protect privacy", thus reducing the attention the college paid to their physical well-being. Under the circumstance where the preventive measures are inadequate, the students with special constitutions may face a sudden illness after having intense exercises or when the seasons change.

In view of the above factors, sudden illness emergencies involving college students demonstrate the characteristics of abruptness and urgency. The onsets of campus illness are often unexpected, for it is usually not easily foreseen when, where or to whom the serious illness will come. And what is worth more attention is that "such onsets of sudden illness, directly related to students' life safety, are often more than urgent and may cause irreparable damage to the family, the college and the society if not properly or timely handled"[4].

Additionally, most college students on campus are far away from home and their parents can hardly arrive at school on time, so counselors play a key role in handling students' illness emergencies. The counselor must understand the causes and characteristics of sudden illness onsets on campus so as to build up the idea of putting prevention first and properly deal with the emergent situation at the very onset of serious illness, thus reducing the incidences and damages of illness emergencies to the maximum extent.

4. Early Warning and Prevention Measures

Just as Zhao Juan argues, the establishment of the prevention mechanism is the key to coping with the emergencies of college students[5]. Similarly, doing well in early warning and preventive measures is the fundamental idea of how to handle illness emergencies. Serious illnesses seem to come abruptly, but in fact they often go through a long process of incubation, transformation and outbreak. So it is always more important to do preventive work than to cure the illness. In daily work, the counselor should set up crisis awareness, and do a good job of prevention by taking the following measures.

4.1 Establishing Students' Health Records.

Set up the students' health records, and further know about their health status based on the psychological test for freshmen and the physical examination reports collected at the time of freshmen' enrollment. For students with an accidentally or chronically medical history (such as sudden heart disease, sudden cerebral hemorrhage, epilepsy, asthma, etc.), counselors should establish a medical database with the consent of the students and their parents to track their physical condition on a regular basis. Once discovering some student in an abnormal state, they should contact the parents in time to arrange some medical treatment for the student, and protect his/her privacy during the period of treatment..

4.2 Advocating a Healthy Life and Physical Exercises.

In order to improve college students' physical quality, counselors should appeal to them to keep a healthy diet, have a good sleep and take part in physical exercises by introducing such moves as setting up the system of turning out the dorm lights on time at night and getting up early for jogging in the morning, organizing basketball, volleyball, or tennis matches and holding fun games in class. Counselors should take time out of their busy schedule to participate in the activities among students, through which they can lead students to form a healthy lifestyle as well as know about their current physical and psychological states. In this way, they may help the students with a history of health problems to prevent the occurrence of sudden serious illness.

4.3 Strengthening Safety Education and Emergency Medical Training.

"Nowadays colleges emphasize that safety education is one of the indispensable links in the cultivation of various abilities for college students"[6]. As college counselors, we should carry out safety education and medical training to help college students arouse their awareness of common sudden diseases and master some skills of illness prevention and first aid. One effective way of medical training is to invite professional doctors to give lectures on how to identify common sudden diseases and the corresponding methods of self-help. Through training, students learn to take appropriate self-rescue measures in the first time, which may help save a precious life, other than just dialing 120 or notifying the counselors in the event of illness emergencies.

4.4 Establishing an Efficient Student Information Team.

Often unexpectedly come sudden illnesses, many of which may occur at night or in places where there are fewer people around. But at the onset of serious sudden illness, there should be someone to inform the counselor about the situation in the quickest way. This requires counselors cultivate a seamless, efficient student information team including class committee and dormitory directors, by training them on various emergency measures to improve their emergency response abilities. The establishment of the student information team "enhances the students' sense of class belonging, ensures the timely flow of accurate information, and also serves as an effective way by which the counselor actively respond to students' emergencies"[7]

5. Keys to Handling Sudden Illness Emergencies

As a matter of fact, even with the early prevention work in place, it is still impossible to completely eliminate the occurrence of certain sudden illnesses. From the above case analysis, it can be seen that the counselors rapidly responding to the emergency, timely arriving at the spot and properly dealing with the situation are the keys to handling the sudden illness emergencies.

5.1 Rapidly Responding to the Emergency.

Counselors should keep their cell phones on 24 hours and make a quick response when receiving the message of illness emergency. Other than calling the infirmary, 120, or the staff on duty, if possible, they should at the same time rush to the scene to make an inquiry into the situation.

5.2 Timely Reporting to Relevant Leaders.

Having arrived at the scene, the counselors should stabilize the situation, try the best to save the life in line with the principle of life safety first. However, in such an emergency, it is often difficult for the counselor to take all aspects into consideration and make the right decision on his/her own. Just as Wu Xuebing suggested, “at the critical moment, superior leadership is the most powerful backing”[8]. Therefore, if necessary, they should report the collected information to the relevant leaders in time, so that the related department of the school will formulate correct measures to ensure the pertinence of the overall response. Then they can further carry out work according to the unified deployment and instruction of superior leadership.

5.3 Effectively Communicating with the Parents.

According to the specific situation, the counselor must notify the parents when it is necessary, and ensure in-time communication among the parents, the doctor, and the school. Before the parents arrive, the counselor should communicate with the attending doctor in place of the parents. Whenever an emergency operation is needed, the counselor should obtain parental authorization before signing the surgical confirmation. After the parents arrive at the hospital, the counselor need to tell the parents about the pathogenesis in detail, and provide considerate comfort and persuasion. If the parents do not have enough money, the counselor should help parents to find a way to raise the cure cost with the greatest support of the school, the teachers and students.

As Zou Huanyan notes, counselors are responsible for effective communication between parents and the school, providing a humanistic care for the sick student and his/her parents, and avoiding "unnecessary disputes which may jeopardize the harmonious relationship between parents and schools"[9].

5.4 Instantly Taking Relevant Evidences.

Before signing the surgical confirmation or going through a transfer procedure with the authorization of the parents absent, the counselor should ask for instructions from the leader first, and then explain to the parents about the surgical or transfer risk, the medical level of the hospital, the success rate of surgery as well as the time and cost for medical care. At the same time, the counselor should also record the main development nodes of the event instantly, and make a backup of the records and other materials which can be archived later.

6. Considerations in Doing Follow-up Work

The counselor cannot assume that he/she has completed the task after the sick student is handed over to the parents, for there is still a lot of follow-up work to accomplish.

First, the counselor should play an active role in the psychological counseling, focused on the physical and mental recovery of the student, and help the parents take care of the sick student as much as possible, doing the best to provide the logistics support. It is also important for the counselor to fully understand the feelings of the parents, keep a positive attitude to exchange views with them, and balance the rights and interests between the student and the school. Second, the counselor must observe the reactions of students around, stabilize their moods, help them lead a normal life and guide the positive public opinion. The third follow-up task for the counselor to fulfill is to communicate with the ministry of education and other relevant departments, helping the sick student with the delayed examination procedures as well as the insurance compensation procedures. The last but not least, the counselor should summarize the experiences of illness emergency treatment, compile them into the casebook in order to improve the emergency management mechanism of school[10].

7. Conclusion

In short, counselors working in the front line of student management play a vital role in handling

sudden illness emergencies on campus. They should understand the causes and characteristics of the sudden illness emergencies among college students, and do a good job in preventing the occurrence of illness emergencies to the greatest extent. At the onset of sudden illness, the counselor should timely respond to and properly deal with the emergency in order to minimize the harm of sudden illness emergency. In addition, the counselor should also actively do some rehabilitation work to provide guarantee for successful treatment of the sudden illness emergency.

As counselors, we must further in-depth study of the subject, continuously improve our abilities of handling sudden illness emergencies in order to ensure the students' life security and promote their healthy growth, thus making positive contribution to building a harmonious campus and promoting the social security.

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