

Research on community health education strategies based on the concept of "preventive treatment with traditional Chinese medicine"—Take common gastrointestinal diseases as an example

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Abstract: Based on the Traditional Chinese Medicine(TCM) concept of "preventive treatment," this study explores the principles and strategies for health education for common gastrointestinal diseases in the community, aiming to improve the health literacy of the entire population. Through surveys, research, and literature review, we understand the prevalence of gastrointestinal diseases among community residents. Based on the TCM philosophy of "differentiation of syndromes" and "preventive treatment," we propose the main causes of common gastrointestinal diseases in the community, such as unscientific dietary habits, unstable emotional states, imbalanced exogenous pathogenic factors, dysfunctional viscera, and inadequate health education. Therefore, the following six aspects need to be done: Strengthen publicity and popularization to enhance prevention awareness; Strengthen syndrome differentiation and education to improve health care levels; Optimize lifestyles to improve health literacy; Strengthen emotional management to promote physical and mental well-being; Effectively utilize TCM rehabilitation to highlight its simplicity, affordability, and effectiveness; and Effectively utilize artificial intelligence to achieve intelligent health.

1. Introduction

The Huangdi Neijing, the foundational work of TCM, places great emphasis on disease prevention and health preservation, known as "treating illness before it occurs." The Lingshu-Nishun states: "The best doctor treats illness before it occurs, not after it has occurred. "TCM considers the spleen and stomach to be the "source of qi and blood production" and the "foundation of acquired constitution". The small intestine, the "receiving organ," controls fluids and separates the clear from the turbid; the large intestine, the "transmitting organ" controls fluids and transmits waste, maintaining a smooth flow. Clearly, the physiological functions of the spleen, stomach, and intestines are of vital importance to human life, as they are essential companions in everyday life. For example, eating too spicy, too cold, or being overly full, or even starving yourself, can damage the spleen and stomach, leading to discomfort. Consequently, gastrointestinal disorders are among the most common clinical ailments. TCM places great emphasis on the concept of "preventive treatment" and has made outstanding contributions to the prosperity of the Chinese nation and human health. This study examined the causes of the most common gastrointestinal diseases in the community and proposed a TCM-specific health education strategy.

2. Overview

First, community-based gastrointestinal health education based on the concept of "preventive treatment" fully demonstrates the unique appeal of TCM. TCM embodies profound philosophical

wisdom and the Chinese nation's thousands of years of health and wellness philosophies and practical experience. The TCM's idea of "treating diseases before they are sick" mainly includes two aspects: "preventing before they are sick" and "preventing changes in existing diseases". As early as the "Su Wen·The Great Treatise on the Four Qis and Stimulation of the Spirit", it proposed the "Sages do not treat diseases before they have been cured, and do not treat diseases before they have been cured, " and guided the health care and clinical prevention work of traditional Chinese medicine. The Treatise on Febrile and Miscellaneous Diseases established a system of syndrome differentiation and treatment, a crucial methodology guiding TCM clinical practice. Li Dongyuan's "Spleen and Stomach" puts forward the important conclusion that "all diseases are born from the weakening of the spleen and stomach"; Li Zhongzi puts forward the classic statement that "spleen and stomach are the foundation of acquired nature", which shows that the physiological functions of the spleen and stomach are extremely important for human life activities.

Secondly, carrying out health education on gastrointestinal diseases in the community can promote early prevention and treatment of gastrointestinal diseases and standardize health care. Clinically, gastrointestinal diseases have two major characteristics: first, the symptoms of gastrointestinal diseases are not strongly correlated with modern medical diseases, and second, the degree of symptoms of gastrointestinal diseases is not strongly correlated with the severity of the disease^[1]. At the same time, gastrointestinal diseases are not only diverse and complex in themselves (digestive department), but also related to some diseases in other clinical departments, such as anemia and bleeding in hematology, diabetes in endocrinology, ischemic diseases in cardiovascular department, menstrual diseases in gynecology, etc. In addition, some gastrointestinal diseases are not easy to be discovered in the early stage, such as gastric cancer, gastric polyps, etc. Therefore, carrying out health education and prevention work on common gastrointestinal diseases is particularly important and urgent.

3. Common causes of gastrointestinal diseases in the community

3.1 Unscientific eating habits

Unhealthy lifestyles and unscientific behavioral habits are the main causes of chronic diseases in the community. Gastrointestinal diseases are closely related to eating habits. "Three meals a day", "diseases come from the mouth", "all diseases are caused by spleen and stomach deficiency", etc. , are all directly and closely related to the spleen, stomach and intestines. The fiber content in food has a great influence on the prevalence of constipation symptoms. For example, a regression analysis of patients with chronic atrophic gastritis (CAG) found^[2]: coarse grains, pickles, fried foods, alcohol , etc. are positively correlated with CAG and are risk factors for the occurrence of CAG; while leafy vegetables, fresh fruits, eggs , etc. are negatively correlated with CAG. Smoking and drinking will increase the risk of gastric cancer^[3], and moderate exercise can enhance the body's immunity and also help prevent gastric cancer.

3.2 Unstable emotional state

The Danxi Heart Method: Six Depressions says: "When Qi and blood are in harmony, all diseases will not occur. Once there is depression, all diseases will arise. " This shows that emotions have a great relationship with the circulation of Qi and blood, and affect the health of the human body. Long-term excessive mental stress may lead to a decrease in the body's immunity and increase the risk of cancer. People who are often angry, unhappy in marriage, have poor interpersonal relationships, have severe psychological trauma or are depressed for a long time are usually more likely to suffer from gastric cancer^[4]. Studies have shown that patients with functional gastrointestinal diseases (FGIDs) with anxiety and depression have obvious autonomic nervous system dysfunction, and gender, education level, chronic disease status, and sympathetic nervous function are all influencing factors^[5]. The basic pathogenesis is liver-stomach disharmony and Qi stagnation^[6].

3.3 Imbalance of external pathogenic factors

External pathogenic factors disrupt the balance of yin and yang in the human body, causing various diseases. For example, the six external pathogenic factors invade the stomach and intestines, causing wind and cold to enter the body, stagnate the meridians, and cause pain when the meridians are blocked; dampness blocks the spleen and stomach, causing dysfunction of digestion and transport, imbalance of qi, poor appetite, nausea, bloating, abdominal pain, and diarrhea; heat and toxins, such as *Helicobacter pylori* infection, are prone to inflammation, ulcers, and even tumors. Among 2,337 patients discharged from a tertiary hospital with spleen and stomach diseases, erosive gastritis and atrophic gastritis were the most common spleen and stomach diseases^[7]. According to statistics, gastric cancer ranks fifth in the global incidence of cancer and fourth in the cause of death^[8]. However, timely control of the development of gastritis, especially actively treating or reversing gastric mucosa atrophy and intestinal transformation, is the key point to prevent the occurrence of gastric cancer, which is the specific application of TCM to "treat before treatment".

3.4 Disharmony of organ function

The Suwen: Qigong Tongtian Lun says: "When yin and yang are balanced, the spirit is in good health. "Gastrointestinal diseases are located in the stomach and intestines, but are closely related to the spleen, kidney, liver, gallbladder, heart, lungs, and triple energizer. According to TCM, the spleen is responsible for ascending and the stomach is responsible for descending. They coexist in the middle energizer, and the upper and lower organs are coordinated and coordinated. They are the pivot of qi and the source of qi and blood. The liver and gallbladder regulate qi and aid digestion. The heart is responsible for the spirit and is the exterior and interior of the small intestine. The lung is responsible for the dispersal and the large intestine is the exterior and interior of the large intestine. The kidney is responsible for the storage and contains the roots of yin and yang of the organs. These are all closely related to gastrointestinal diseases. For example, FGIDs overlap syndrome can be caused by dysfunction of the spleen and stomach, liver wood resisting earth, and poor lung qi function^[9].

3.5 Inadequate health education

Health education is a crucial source of health information for community residents. Due to the complexity of the online world and the proliferation of various media and self-media platforms, health information is diverse, ranging from credible and reliable to overly generalized, false, and misleading. In rural areas, due to a lack of understanding of the causes and developments of illnesses, some residents are easily deceived by the self-proclaimed, one-sided accounts of online media. They often face intimidation (for example, patients with chronic atrophic gastritis fear "precancerous lesions" and those with gastrointestinal polyps fear "tumors"), leading to sleep disturbances and anxiety. Alternatively, they may be easily deceived by online drug sales pitches, unaware that the so-called "miracle cures" may be counterfeit. It is not only wastes money, but also increases psychological burden.

4. Basic principles for the prevention and treatment of common gastrointestinal diseases in the community

4.1 Put health science popularization in a more important position

Health science popularization is a systematic project that requires the coordinated efforts of health service providers, regulators, health entities and the society. On the one hand, authoritative media should make efforts. Governments at all levels and their relevant departments should actively use local mainstream media and public media resources (such as bus videos, large screens in squares, etc.) to play a greater role in health promotion and health science popularization. On the other hand, the health and health system should take the lead. As an important force in the health and health front, county and township medical institutions should take community health education as a major task, and community health service workers have an unshirkable responsibility and

should actively guide community residents to establish a correct view of health. At the same time, in the health education of community gastrointestinal diseases, we can give full play to the concepts and technical advantages of traditional Chinese medicine, promote the high-quality development of traditional Chinese medicine at the grassroots level^[10], and benefit the health of community residents.

4.2 Make disease prevention a top priority

"Adhering to prevention first" and "giving equal importance to TCM and Western medicine" are long-standing health policies in China. Clearly, prevention is the most economical and effective health strategy. The TCM concept of "treating illness before it occurs" is the earliest origin of the concept of "prevention" encompassing prevention before illness occurs, preventing transmission after illness occurs, and preventing recurrence after recovery. Modern preventive medicine's "three-level prevention" is consistent with TCM's "treating illness before it occurs." Community-based health education on gastrointestinal diseases should prioritize prevention before it occurs and proactively treat early-stage illnesses. Targeted health education on dietary adjustments and lifestyle adjustments should also be provided to patients who have recently recovered from illness to prevent recurrence.

4.3 Put health knowledge in the hands of community residents

Health is a state of being healthy, mentally stable, well-adapted to society, well-behaved, and living in harmony with the environment^[11]. In carrying out community health education, we must start from the overall health of the person and take into account multiple factors such as physiology, mental health, social relations, and the special environment of the community, so as to improve the effect of health education. Secondly, we must innovate the methods and approaches of health education to improve efficiency. We must use authoritative health education platforms and clients to make full use of the health big data of community residents, provide "short, solid, fast and new" health guidance for residents who have gastrointestinal diseases or have clear gastrointestinal diseases, and correctly guide community residents to prevent diseases and promote health.

4.4 Keep typical cases close to the medical staff

Famous Chinese medicine sayings such as "When righteous Qi exists within, evil cannot enter" "Where evil gathers, Qi must be weak" "Evil and thieves are like thieves, and there is a time to avoid them" and "All diseases arise from spleen and stomach weakness" reveal the fundamental purpose of community health education. Firstly, we must prioritize strengthening the body's righteous Qi to resist evil Qi. Secondly, we must proactively take preventive measures based on individual constitutions and health conditions to prevent evil Qi from taking advantage of vulnerable areas. Thirdly, we must prioritize protecting the spleen and stomach, ensuring a continuous flow of Qi and blood and proper Qi movement. When conducting community health education on gastrointestinal diseases, clinical medical staff can promote common knowledge about typical gastrointestinal diseases, such as chronic gastritis, gastric ulcers, and functional dyspepsia, inspiring everyone to protect spleen and gastrointestinal function and cherish their health.

4.5 Intercept difficult and serious diseases at the initial stage

Complicated and serious gastrointestinal diseases can cause greater suffering for patients and present greater challenges for clinical diagnosis and treatment. If doctors can effectively manage the disease in its early stages, patients can reduce both physical and mental suffering and the financial burden. The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine summarizes the highest realm of Traditional Chinese Medicine as "treating illness before it occurs" with the phrase "a sage does not treat an existing illness, but rather treats a potential one." Sun Simiao also emphasized the principle of preventive medicine, stating that "the best doctor treats illness before it occurs, the middle doctor treats impending illness, and the inferior doctor treats existing illness." This clearly demonstrates the profound significance of Traditional Chinese Medicine's preventive approach to improving public health.

5. Health education strategies for common gastrointestinal diseases in the community

5.1 Strengthen publicity and popularization to enhance prevention awareness

Gastrointestinal diseases have a high prevalence and incidence rate, ranking at the forefront of the community disease spectrum, and seriously affecting the health and living standards of residents. However, the key factor of "diseases enter the body through the mouth" is often ignored or unknown by residents. First of all, we must increase the efforts to popularize health knowledge and improve the public's awareness. By popularizing knowledge related to gastrointestinal diseases and their prevention methods, we can improve the public's awareness of health care knowledge, or cultivate the habit of regular physical examinations and self-testing of health^[12]. Second, we should innovate propaganda and education methods to improve the effectiveness of propaganda. We should make full use of the convenience of online media and the methods that are easy for the public to learn and use, such as community WeChat public accounts, health propaganda work groups, community radio stations, etc., to make health education on gastrointestinal diseases a reality and reach the hearts of the people. Innovative community health education can help improve the health education ability, communication ability and scientific literacy of general practitioners^[13]. The third is to implement grid-based education and promote the normalization of health education. Deepening the supervision and inspection of the reform and implementation of the family doctor contract system can strengthen the family doctor team, absorb professional and technical personnel in the digestive field of the leading unit of the medical community to join the team, and improve the pertinence and professionalism of health education. Besides, it is necessary to refine the standards for general practitioners to visit homes and carry out health education, and clearly include the prevention and treatment of gastrointestinal diseases in the necessary content of health education.

5.2 Strengthen syndrome differentiation and teaching, and improve health care level

Syndrome differentiation is the soul of TCM, and syndrome-based education is the defining characteristic of community-based gastrointestinal health education. Gastrointestinal diseases vary greatly. Some share similar symptoms, such as superficial gastritis and atrophic gastritis, which both present with epigastric fullness and dull pain. Others, such as vomiting and diarrhea, present significantly different symptoms. First, ensuring the "one disease, one education" approach is fundamental. For example, for chronic atrophic gastritis, a basic education program might focus on "fresh food, regular diet, emotional stability, avoidance of pickled or smoked foods, and gastroscopy when necessary." Second, strengthening the "one syndrome, one education" approach is crucial for distinctiveness. For example, for chronic atrophic gastritis characterized by weak spleen and stomach, the "Four Gentlemen Pheasantum Bun" (including Radix Pseudostellariae, stir-fried Atractylodes macrocephala, Poria cocos, roasted Licorice root, Chinese yam, and chicken's gizzard lining) can be added. The third step is to strengthen the ability to "combine disease and syndrome". While the "disease" can be clearly located and the "syndrome" can be clearly quantified and characterized, the "combination of disease and syndrome" can determine the outcome". This means that a personalized health education plan can be designed more precisely for patients with a specific disease, thereby improving the effectiveness of health education

5.3 Optimize lifestyle and improve health literacy

Lifestyle is an important root cause of the occurrence and development of community chronic diseases, including gastrointestinal diseases. If the diet is not moderate or the diet is unclean, or the diet is partial, the spleen and stomach's transportation and transformation functions and the functions of ascending clear and descending turbid will be damaged, and spleen and stomach deficiency, phlegm and dampness obstruction, damp heat accumulation and various functional gastrointestinal diseases will occur. Therefore, personalized dietary habits should be adjusted according to the residents' diseases and individual differences. At the same time, according to the living and cultural characteristics of the community masses, focusing on common and frequently occurring gastrointestinal diseases in the community, regular health lectures, health knowledge showcases and health consultation desks, etc. , are held to actively guide community residents to

consciously form healthy living habits such as reasonable diet, scientific and moderate exercise, quitting smoking and limiting alcohol, cultivating interests and hobbies, and regular physical examinations^[14], thereby reducing the incidence of chronic diseases.

5.4 Strengthen emotional management and promote physical and mental well-being

"Emotions are the source of all diseases". "Attaching importance to mental health" is also an important part of health education for gastrointestinal diseases. The occurrence and development of most gastrointestinal diseases are related to negative emotional stimulation. For example, irritable bowel syndrome is closely related to factors such as mental tension and excessive stress. Clinically, we have also found that more than 70% of chronic atrophic gastritis and changes in bowel habits are related to emotions such as anxiety and irritability. "Scientific exercise is an important part of life activities." Appropriate exercise can improve the body's immunity and regulate the impact of negative emotions on gastrointestinal function. Tong Xiaolin proposed the key points of differentiation of fire depression, cold depression, food depression, surface depression, dampness, phlegm, and blood stasis in gastrointestinal diseases^[15], and listed representative prescriptions and medicines. In addition, music therapy can effectively improve the negative emotions of FGID patients^[16], and improve clinical efficacy.

5.5 Make good use of traditional Chinese medicine rehabilitation to achieve simplicity, cheapness and effectiveness

TCM not only attaches importance to people's physical and mental health, but also attaches importance to the harmonious coexistence between people and the natural and social environments. At the same time, it also pays special attention to the protection of the human body's "pre-illness, impending illness, and already ill" life cycle and disease cycle. Therefore, we must give full play to the unique advantages of traditional Chinese medicine, and achieve "accurate syndrome differentiation first, appropriate prescriptions and medications, attention to the three causes, and health care and peace of mind"^[17] continuously improve the level of community gastrointestinal disease prevention and treatment, and help the high-quality development of community health services. Some people believe that the use of flower-based Chinese medicine to treat gastrointestinal diseases has outstanding efficacy^[18]. Therefore, a series of herbal teas (or porridges) could be developed based on the etiology, pathogenesis, severity, and physical constitution of different gastrointestinal diseases. For example, "Shuangbaihua Drink" (rose, white peony, lily) could be used for those with liver depression and spleen deficiency; "Shuangren Soup" (lentil flower, coix seed, amomum villosum, kudzu root) for those with internal damp-heat; and "Sijun Pheasant Bun" for those with weak spleen and stomach. These research findings should be incorporated into community health education on gastrointestinal diseases.

5.6 Making Good Use of Artificial Intelligence to Achieve Smart Health

At present, the development of artificial intelligence is in full swing, and the application of artificial intelligence in the medical field is also advancing in depth. With the comprehensive advancement of China's modernization construction, the construction of digital villages will inevitably advance simultaneously. Making good use of modern means such as the Internet, big data, and artificial intelligence to serve community health education is the general trend and the will of the people. Through the new health education model of "three micros" of Internet+micro time, micro platform, and micro health, the effectiveness of community health education in the new era will be continuously improved^[19]. At the same time, we will effectively integrate technologies from multiple disciplines such as information technology, biology and medicine, develop a health information collection, identification, and analysis system with independent intellectual property rights, and establish a regional population health management and monitoring sharing platform based on the traditional Chinese medicine concept of "preventive treatment"^[20], thereby improving the early warning mechanism and prevention and treatment level of gastrointestinal diseases.

6. Conclusion

In short, the incidence of gastrointestinal diseases is very high, almost commonplace, and everyone experiences them. More importantly, since gastric cancer, intestinal cancer, esophageal cancer, and other digestive tract tumors also account for a high proportion of the cancer spectrum, it is necessary to strengthen community awareness and health education on gastrointestinal diseases, raising awareness among community residents and the general public about common gastrointestinal diseases, thereby improving community gastrointestinal disease prevention and the "three early and one standard" (early detection, early diagnosis, early treatment, and standardized treatment) approach, and minimizing the occurrence of serious gastrointestinal diseases to the greatest extent possible.

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