

SKILLS COURSE ON HOME HEALTH CARE FOR FAMILY PHYSICIANS – COURSE OVERVIEW

BACKGROUND

Family physicians are often asked to see frail and disabled people who are home-bound. These patients are generally elderly and their numbers are expected to increase in the near future with ageing of the population. They are also more likely to present with complex problems and in tandem with this, the higher expectations of the family physician to care for them. Family physicians may wish to enhance the quality of their practice by extending the care to the patients' own homes. Over and above the occasional house-call for an acute medical problem, there is tremendous value in scheduled home visits. The home visit will not only yield relevant information which may lead to improved care processes and outcomes, it is also highly appreciated by patients and their families. The very presence of the physician in the home is in itself a powerful statement of his/her commitment to the care of the patient. A physician's involvement in home care is driven by professional ethics, compassion and duty. Like many other aspects of medicine, it is neither convenient nor always financially rewarding. Physicians still provide them when they are deemed to be the best for the patient.

There is a need to define and improve the roles of family physicians in home care. This course hopes to provide a framework in which the family physician can provide home care to the home-bound older patient more effectively. With a common framework, they are then able to work in closer partnership with other community and institutional healthcare providers.

AIM

Introduce the concept of home health care to GPs and equip them with basic skills in managing health problems of home-bound older persons.

OBJECTIVES

A. Concept

1. Outline the philosophy of home health care
2. Understand the different models and scopes of services of home health care practice
3. Appreciate the advantages of home health care
4. Identify the unique features of home health care and its potential stressors
5. Compare the differences between ambulatory health care with home health care
6. Know how to adapt to home health care practice

B. Skills

1. Know how to select patients for a home health care programme
2. Identify the factors required for successful home care
3. Recognise the special problems and needs of frail and disabled older persons
4. Perform a comprehensive assessment during a home visit
5. Apply the bio-psycho-social approach in care planning and management

6. Know the types of home health and social services available in the community and how the GP could integrate with these services to provide comprehensive care
7. Know how to evaluate patient outcomes of home health care management

COURSE STRUCTURE

1. Distance Learning Package (6 CME points)
The objective is to provide the student with the theoretical basis of home health care. It comprises of:
 - a. 6 lecture units in the package. Each unit comprises of one set of lecture material serving to collate the key points of the unit and a list of recommended reading material
 - b. One set of 30 assessment questions (MCQs) to evaluate the factual knowledge acquired in the lecture units. The answers will be submitted to CFPS for marking.
 - c. 3 case studies to evaluate the student's ability to apply the knowledge. This will be discussed during the workshop session.
2. Workshop (3 hours) (2 CME points)
The objective is to provide the student with specific hands-on knowledge and skills required to manage commonly encountered issues in home care. It comprises of:
 - a. Case study discussion (1.5 hours)
 - b. Skills stations on enteric feeding, continence aids, wound care, aids and appliances and transfers/ambulation (1.5 hours)
3. Clinical attachment to a home medical agency (3 hours) (2 CME points)
The student will be allowed to participate in home health care activities under supervision of a home care physician at an accredited home medical agency. Besides having the opportunity to evaluate patients in their own homes, the candidate will also be able to see how an inter-disciplinary home health care team functions. Activities include:
 - a. Home visit:
One supervised home visit will be made and the student is expected to conduct a basic geriatric assessment during the visit
 - b. Case-conference:
The student is expected to discuss the management of the patients he/she has visited during the case conferences.

A certificate of attendance will be awarded on application to candidates who have completed the distance learning package, workshop and the clinical attachment.