

Modifying Self-Care Behavior in Patients with Heart Failure: Impact of the HF Dedicated Nurse Intervention.

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Background: Optimizing self-care behavior related to heart failure (HF) including adherence to medical therapy, keeping appropriate diet, daily weighing, exercise training and seeking professional assistance when needed is considered essential for improving outcomes in patients (pts) with HF.

The aim of the study was to describe the impact of an intervention by a HF dedicated nurse on the self-care behavior pattern of pts with HF. Methods: Between March and September 2006, 42 advanced HF pts, 81% males, mean age 66.1±13 years, New York Heart Association, class III-IV were referred to an outpatient clinic, in a tertiary care teaching hospital, by their treating cardiologists or GP's. On arrival, pts completed the European Heart Failure Self-care Behavior Scale (EHFScBS).

After filling the questionnaire, pts were examined and interviewed by the HF dedicated nurse. Data regarding their habits, socioeconomic status, supportive system, quality of life and their knowledge about their disease were recorded. Pts were thoroughly instructed and an illustrated educational booklet on HF was supplied. Availability of the HF dedicated nurse for advice and guidance was promised. The EHFScBS was repeated within 12±4 weeks.

Results: The median EHFScBS score was 38 and 26 at baseline and after 12±4 weeks of follow up, respectively ($p<0.05$). From the whole group, 11 (28 %) pts did not improve (less than 10% improvement from baseline). Among the non-responders, 7 (64%) were males, 3 (27%) were divorced or widowed and 8 (73%) were from a low socioeconomic status.

Conclusion: Intervention by a HF dedicated nurse has the potential of modulating the self-care behavior pattern of pts with advanced HF. The EHFScBS is an effective tool for assessing self-care and helps further case management.