

Physical activity on prescription; an education and training program for healthcare practitioners in Vietnam

Introduction: The rapid rise of Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, mental disorder and osteoporotic fracture make up the largest contribution to mortality in low and middle income countries. The present cooperation project between Vietnam and Sweden addresses the rights perspective of all people regardless of socio-economic conditions and should therefore contribute strongly to the development of a more pluralistic society in which all citizens can be empowered through better health. Physical activity (PA) in disease prevention and treatment helps individuals, their family and the entire community to combat poverty. Similar to other developing countries, Vietnam is faced with a double burden of disease: high levels of communicable disease and a rapid rise of non-communicable diseases. According to the health statistics, the prevalence of NCDs from hospital reports in Vietnam increased while communicable diseases decreased. The NCDs share of disease prevalence and contribution to crude fraction of death causes in hospitals was 42 and 45 % in 1976 and 60 and 60 % in 2007, respectively.

Methods: This is a Swedish aid agency funded, multi-component international cooperation project including 1. Workshops on "Promoting Physical Activities in NCDs prevention", 2. Study visits to Sweden, 3. Selective translation of a handbook of PA prescription from English to Vietnamese, 4. Development of curriculum and training material, 5. Training of trainers (TOT courses) in Sweden, 6. Training courses (partly case-based) for health care practitioners in Vietnam, 8. Mass media campaign, 9. Evaluation of effectiveness after training for patients and health care providers, 10. International Conference in Hanoi in November 2012 and 11. Process to help introduce National Guidelines on PA for NCDs Prevention.

Results: Of the 120 healthcare practitioners that will be trained, 50 have provided feed-back on the perceived value and significance of the education and training. The practitioners report that they after the training sessions 1. Have a markedly greater understanding of the relation between life style and disease, 2. Have made implementation plans in their own clinical setting.

Discussion: The project shows that structured training of healthcare practitioners in Vietnam can increase interest, knowledge and willingness to change clinical practice in the field of physical activity on prescription. Also, the project is an example of international collaboration in this field.