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Empowering Elderly Agents: Improving The Understanding And Awareness Of Having Medical Check Up As An Early Detection Of Degenerative Diseases

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Background: Successful development is a goal for every country that can be measured from the people's life span and quality of life. Yet, the increase of life span can make the transition of epidemiology in medical sciences because of the increasing rate of the degenerative diseases. As people get older, the physiological functions decrease, therefore the degenerative diseases often appear at the elderly stage. Moreover, the degenerative problems weaken the physiological systems which make their bodies susceptible to diseases. Another factor that also influences the physical conditions and antibody of an elderly is: the lifestyle and dietary pattern. The diseases in the elderly are often different from the ones in young adults, because the diseases in the elderly are a combination of abnormalities caused by the aging process; that is the inability of the cells to repair themselves as well as to maintain the structure and functions normally so that they can not survive against diseases (including infections) and repair the damage. The results of the "Survey Mawas Diri" (SMD) -- the survey on self awareness -- of the elderly in Sabdodadi village, Bantul, Yogyakarta in 2016 shows that among 319 people, there were 68(16%) elderly people who were suffering from degenerative diseases. The lack of awareness from the elderly to have a routine medical check-up as an early detection of the degenerative diseases is caused by the lack of knowledge on it. "SMD" also points out that 73(69%) of the elderly in Sabdodadi didn't know what the degenerative diseases are and the importance of checking their health regularly.

Objectives: The aim of this activity is to raise awareness of the elderly to have a regular check-up by improving their understanding of the degenerative diseases. This can be done by empowering the elderly as agents to be the mediator between the health workers and the community. In preventing and having an early detection of degenerative diseases in the elderly.

Method: There were 293 elderly people who participated in this activity that was held in 20 different places in Sabdodadi from May 8 until May 30, 2016. The methods used are by active learning combined with a video show and group discussions (FGDS) as well as pre-test and post-test. We have 15 elderly agents who have committed themselves to actively encourage the community to have better understanding and be aware of degenerative diseases.

Results: The activity results in their better understanding about degenerative diseases, which can raise their awareness of the importance of checking their health routinely as an early detection. The elderly agents have successfully made the community aware of and care about their lives.

Conclusion: The methods used to give better understanding and education in elderly are very effective and it is recommended to raise the level of awareness.

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