

Promoting the health of the elderly in the Piyasuk community, Nai Mueang Subdistrict, Mueang District, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province.

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In 2022, Thailand had a population of 66 million people according to the Ministry of Interior's registration records. Of this number, 13 million were elderly people aged 60 and above, accounting for 19.21% of the total population. This included 5.52 million males and 6.95 million females. Regarding the health of the elderly population, there were 770,000 individuals with dementia, 44,325 bedridden seniors, 198,338 housebound seniors, 7.3 million socially active seniors, and 1.2 million elderly with disabilities.

Thailand is moving toward becoming a fully aging society, leading to challenges in health, economic, and social aspects of elderly life. Many health problems among Thai seniors are linked to long-standing behaviors from their working years, which have led to chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, kidney disease, stroke, and cancer. Among these, diabetes and hypertension are particularly common, and if not properly managed, can cause complications. Encouraging the elderly to form groups for mutual support and to improve health behaviors—such as eating a balanced diet, exercising, and getting sufficient rest—can help prevent diseases and improve their quality of life.

To support the aging society and improve the quality of life for elderly people, elderly groups or clubs in villages and communities play a crucial role. These groups understand the specific needs and problems of the elderly and can provide targeted health and lifestyle interventions. However, in some areas, these elderly groups lack the strength and continuity to carry out meaningful activities. Some are still in the early stages of formation, while others, despite being established for a while, do not conduct regular activities for seniors.

In Piyasuk Community, Muang District, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province, there are 1,500 registered residents in 625 households. Of these, 400 are elderly (26.66% of the population), which is higher than the national average. Among the elderly, 50 are housebound (12%), 1 is bedridden (0.25%), and 349 are socially active (87.25%), indicating that the community is fully part of the aging society. This has affected the elderly's health, economy, and social life. Health-wise, the most common conditions are hypertension (190 people, 54%), followed by diabetes (80 people, 22.85%), high cholesterol (60 people, 17.14%), kidney disease (15 people, 4.28%), and heart disease (5 people, 1.42%). These health issues are often linked to risky behaviors such as living in cramped spaces, limited access to exercise facilities, and the convenience of ordering food online, leading to poor health management and complications.

The Piyasuk Community has some strengths in addressing elderly health. The Nakhon Si Thammarat Municipality supports activities that improve quality of life, including healthcare services and home visits for sick seniors. Retired government officials lead the community's elderly groups, providing knowledge to their peers. The close-knit nature of the community allows for easier support and accessibility. The community also benefits from partnerships with local schools, the municipal hospital, and other organizations, including local wisdom experts and health volunteers.

Objectives

1. Strengthen elderly groups in the community to support health promotion initiatives.

Target Group (at least 50 people)

1. Seniors who can take care of themselves (socially active group): 50 people (26% of the socially active elderly in the community).
2. Housebound seniors: 0 people (0% of housebound elderly in the community).
3. Bedridden seniors: 0 people (0% of bedridden elderly in the community).

Activities

1. Create project signs, including non-smoking and alcohol-free zones.
2. Hold a meeting to explain the project, assign roles, and set common agreements.
3. Provide training to elderly group leaders.
4. Survey and document the situation of the elderly.
5. Conduct three community assessment and review (ARE) meetings every 3-4 months with 15 project leaders to evaluate and learn from the activities.
6. Hold monthly meetings for elderly group members.
7. Conduct health-promoting activities, focusing on exercise and healthy eating for the elderly.
8. Organize home visits for elderly in the target group.
9. Host a final reflection meeting to review project outcomes.
10. Collaborate with Walailak University to monitor and evaluate the outcomes of the project.
11. Prepare online reports summarizing the activities and outcomes.

Expected Outcomes

1. A working group capable of managing the project effectively:
 - 15 leaders understand the project goals.
2. Elderly participants gain knowledge to care for their health:
 - Agreements are made on elderly participation in group activities.
 - 5 elderly members become exercise group leaders.
 - 50 participants aim to change their behavior, particularly in diet and exercise.

3. A supportive environment is created for elderly health promotion:
 - Data is collected on behavior changes among the elderly in the target group.
 - Personal behavior changes are recorded in a group chat.
 - More exercise spaces are created in the community.
4. Elderly participants adopt healthy behaviors based on the 2 principles — diet and exercise:
 - 70% of the target group exercises regularly (3 times a week for 30 minutes, or 150 minutes per week).
 - They consume a balanced diet.
 - 80% of elderly participants engage in activities consistently.
 - An elderly club is established in the community.

Impact

The project will have significant impacts on both the health and social well-being of the elderly in Piyasuk Community. Strengthening the elderly groups and implementing structured activities will result in the following positive outcomes:

1. **Improved Health Outcomes:** By promoting healthy behaviors such as regular exercise, balanced nutrition, and consistent health monitoring, elderly participants will be better equipped to manage or prevent chronic conditions like hypertension, diabetes, and high cholesterol. This will lead to a reduction in the incidence of health complications and a general improvement in the quality of life for the elderly.
2. **Increased Health Awareness:** The project will empower the elderly with knowledge about self-care, enabling them to take charge of their own health. Elderly participants will learn to identify and reduce risky behaviors, leading to healthier lifestyle choices. The emphasis on preventive care will also help reduce the burden on local healthcare services.

3. **Social Inclusion and Engagement:** Encouraging elderly individuals to participate in group activities will foster a sense of belonging and reduce social isolation. This is especially crucial for socially active seniors, as group participation can enhance mental well-being and emotional support, combating loneliness and depression. The formation of an elderly club will further solidify this support system.
4. **Sustainable Community Health Initiatives:** Through partnerships with local organizations like schools, hospitals, and community leaders, the project will establish a sustainable model for elderly care in the community. The project will not only benefit the elderly but also create a lasting framework for future health promotion activities, ensuring the continuity and growth of the elderly groups.
5. **Enhanced Leadership and Community Involvement:** Training elderly leaders to manage the project will cultivate local leadership, creating a group of individuals capable of organizing and leading health promotion activities. This leadership will contribute to the long-term sustainability of the initiative, as the community becomes more self-sufficient in caring for its elderly members.
6. **Supportive Environment for Health Promotion:** The creation of spaces for exercise and the promotion of a non-smoking, alcohol-free environment will provide a healthier community atmosphere, not just for the elderly but for all community members. This environment will encourage a healthier lifestyle and set a positive example for future generations.

In summary, the project will enhance the physical, mental, and social well-being of the elderly in Piyasuk Community, create a sustainable support system, and contribute to the overall health and cohesiveness of the community.