

The Health Promotion and Rehabilitation for Homebound and Bedridden Patients through Physical Therapy

The Health Promotion and Rehabilitation for Homebound and Bedridden Patients through Physical Therapy is an ongoing project by the School of Allied Health Sciences, Walailak University. It is part of the Project Series "Walailak Health Model: Restoring Quality of Life and Creating Sustainable Well-being in Community Areas Around the University." It focuses on patient care services and the creation of a health system database, making patient data more accessible to service providers, including those at sub-district health promoting hospitals. This system also ensures the swift transfer of patient information between healthcare providers. The project integrates applied Thai traditional medicine through the course "Thai Traditional Therapeutic Massage 3," combined with physical therapy knowledge from the course "Basic Physical Therapy in the Community" and pharmacy studies from the courses "Spa and Natural Spa Products" and "Fundamental Pharmacognosy."

It delivers outreach programmes and projects in the local community, and the process began with activities focused on enhancing the database and patient referral system for those requiring rehabilitation services. Meetings were held with sub-district health promoting hospitals to study the existing database and referral system, aiming to design a localized system. This system was either an improvement of the current one or a new system tailored to local needs. The goal was to create a patient database for rehabilitation services, ensuring a mutual understanding of patient referrals from main hospitals back to the community.

Physical therapy services were developed through fieldwork, where physical therapists and community leaders assessed, screened, and provided rehabilitation services to 13 elderly patients. The frequency of physical therapy services was adjusted based on the severity of each patient's condition. Additionally, capacity-building activities were conducted to enhance the skills of existing leaders and train new ones, based on the community's needs. Twelve individuals were trained in elderly care and rehabilitation.

Follow-ups on bedridden patient care revealed that 100% of the village health volunteers (VHVs) could effectively apply their knowledge, leading to significant improvement in patient rehabilitation. VHVs demonstrated meticulous attention to the rehabilitation process, resulting in better outcomes for bedridden patients.

In terms of disease prevention and health promotion, activities targeted pre-elderly individuals at risk of developing non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Screening for risk factors among 29 pre-elderly individuals revealed that only 10 had normal cardiovascular and respiratory endurance (34.48%). After providing education on NCD prevention and control, and continuously monitoring and managing the impacts in alignment with community needs, the percentage of those with normal cardiovascular and respiratory endurance rose to 85%.

The project also extended activities to 30 migrant workers, mostly from Cambodia (93%) and Laos (7%), working in the fishing industry in Tha Sala District. It was found that 80% of the migrant workers had weak hand muscles and poor back muscle flexibility, which could lead to work-related injuries. Individualized education and consultation on muscle stretching were provided to help prevent injuries related to their occupation.

Additionally, the project team shared their findings at academic exhibitions on community service and area-based research aligned with sustainable development goals. These exhibitions were presented to the public and representatives from agencies in Nakhon Si Thammarat province to encourage the expansion of activities to other areas surrounding Walailak University.