INTERPROFESSIONAL EDUCATION FOR HAPPY AGING SOCIETY IN THAILAND: STRATEGIC APPROACHES

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Abstract

The number of elderly people in Thailand dramatically increases leading to Aged Society in 2025. According to the population of Thailand in 2013, Thailand has 9.6 million elderly people and presumably rises to 17.6 million in 2030. In 2040, the United Nations (UN) estimated that Thailand will have the highest elderly population in ASEAN. Recently, caring for seniors depended on the healthcare professionals and Social Development and Human Security team as opposed to trends of elderly care in the next few years that require in four dimensions including economic, social, health and environmental and public services. Interprofessional education (IPE), therefore, seems to be strategic approaches for building the happy aging society in Thailand.

The aims of this study were to 1) Explore the academic curriculum of multidisciplinary and literature reviews to identify current knowledge and practices of interprofessionals relating to elderly care 2) Outline strategic approaches necessary for building the happy aging society via interprofessionals. The literature search was conducted with the assistance of a librarian from Boromarajonani College of Nursing Nakhon, Lampang. Databases searched included CINAHL and Clinical Keys. Additional searching was done using Google and Google Scholar to search for literature and any reports of interprofessional education relating to aging in use in Thailand. Results presented regarding 1) the relevant activities of individual professionals to aged care 2) Strategic approaches needed for happy aging society in Thailand based on interprofessional education and collaboration.

It could be concluded from this study that not only healthcare professional can built the happy aging society but also require knowledge and practices of multidisciplinary which train or implement via interprofessional education.

Keywords: elderly care, happy aging society, interprofessional education

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Introduction

Thailand is in the transition to an aged society. According to the United Nations World Population Age, it is found that in 2017 the number of young population is less than the elderly. According to the rapid drop of birth rate as well as the continuous decrease of the mortality rate, the proportion of elderly people in Thailand escalate rapidly from 9.6 million in 2013 to be 17.6 million and 20.5 million in 2030 and 2083, respectively. Both public and private agencies have worked together to protect, promote and support the status, roles and activities of the elderly. Therefore, as the professional organization in Thailand, there must be awareness and measures to serve this changing.

Currently, Thailand has launched several policies for the caring of elderly people under the Thailand 4.0 framework, especially in the education system. It could be said that educational institutions must improve educational curriculum for driving the aging society. Furthermore, development of specialized training courses in elderly care and rehabilitation programs that could be postgraduate programs. Notably, academic services should not be limited to merely the development of knowledge and potential of health personnel. But, it should be a source of information for the elderly, caregivers, community leaders and the elderly in the care of the elderly in based on individual community via multidisciplinary collaboration.

Research on strengthening the elderly care of the Thailand 4.0 framework should be transferred to the relevant agencies thoroughly to improve the quality of elderly care. Organization leaders should have a vision in research development in particular the quality of the elderly care. Research should reflect the multidisciplinary collaboration. It is a collaboration of academics, government agencies, private sector and local government agencies. Both public and private agencies are responsible for the promotion of research in elderly care with a reasonable budget that could support elderly health information management. The development of the elderly database system by using new technology can stimulate the elderly care systems with empirical evidence. Besides strengthening the elderly health care network require the community participation. Contribute research and innovation for the quality of elderly care under the Thailand 4.0 framework need a significant component. Development of the competencies for specialized care of families, communities and health care workers using technology is also required. The budget for the elderly care program is also provided.

Multidisciplinary care for the elderly is the specialized skills that need several medical professionals for integrated, comprehensive and holistic care. Multidisciplinary are increasingly important because they emphasize the meaning of health, including physical, mental, social, and intellectual well-being. In this study, we aimed to present the multidisciplinary concept of elderly care in Thailand based on multidisciplinary professionals, both health and non-health, leading to strategic orientation needed for the happy ageing society.

Research Objectives

1) Explore the academic curriculum of multidisciplinary and literature reviews to identify current knowledge and practices of Interprofessionals relating to elderly care;
2) Outline strategic approaches necessary for building the happy aging society via interprofessionals.

Results

1) Interprofessional sharing role in elderly care

In Thailand, there are 14 professionals under supervision of the specific professional organization supposed to play role in aged care. It could be understood that each professional has a unique role. In term of elderly care, however, individual professional needed to work together on a common purpose to build up the happy ageing society in Thailand. In this study, we have reviewed the role relating to elderly care of individual professional, and then divided them into two main groups, such as health and non-health professionals.

In health professional group, there are 8 professional organizations including the Medical Council of Thailand, the Physical Therapy Council, the Dental Council, the Medical Technology Council, the Pharmacy Council, the Thai Traditional Medicine Council, the Thailand Nursing and Midwifery Council and the Veterinary Council. For non-health sector, we included the Federation of Accounting professions, the Lawyers Council under the Royal patronage, the Thai Bar Association under the Royal Patronage, the Teachers’ Council of Thailand, the Council of Engineers, the Architect Council and the Social Work Professions Council in this study.

Remarkably, we had considered the role of each professional in elderly care. This information has been presented in the 4 dimensions of elderly care requirement; economic, social, health and environmental and public services as shown in figure 1.
Economic and the Thai senior citizens

It cannot be denied that the elderly also have to concern about the economic. Recently, Thailand is in the process of proposing the Cabinet to consider extending the retirement age of workers in the private workplace from 55 to 60 years and from 60 to 65 for the government officials. Besides, the government has a senior worker training program to increase the opportunities for a wider range of occupations and to provide social protection for the elderly to be self-reliant. Elderly people should know about economic related to their daily life for balancing allocation of income and expenses, especially income after retirement through the establishment of a provident fund. Recently, saving forms for elderly in Thailand can be classified into non-contributory, mandatory and voluntary saving forms. Moreover, some seniors were interested in the investment in assets including deposit, bond, stock and gold. However, the principle of investment is that highly risky investments will have a high return. Elderly people usually choose to invest in low-yielding assets that also give them low profit. In contrast, some individuals are able to accept high risk and ready to invest in the high volatility assets in order to receive higher returns without thinking of mistakes that could be happened and led to the experiencing loss. Additionally, Unit-linked, a new form of insurance consisting of life insurance and fund is an alternative investment for senior who need to accumulate wealthy by investing in investment units but also have the life protection. However, it is moderately risky for elderly to receive unfair benefits. For the above reasons, seniors may need help in finding the precise
information before making their decision. Therefore, the Federation of Accounting professions, the Lawyers Council under the Royal patronage and the Thai Bar Association under the Royal Patronage could play key role in economic care for senior citizens.

**Social supports for the Thai elderly**

Accordingly, the rate of aging is growing faster than that of the young people therefore the family's ability to care for the elderly diminishes. Hence, establishing long-term care systems at the family and community level is an important issue for the government to be concerned. In Thailand, there are several social services to meet the fundamental needs of elderly people especially, health services, education, accommodation, career and income and social services and recreation. In this part, we excluded the health service from social activities. This issue will be discussed later separately. In term of social services, the education for the elderly will be discussed initially. A guideline for non-formal education for the elderly has been developed by the Special Education Promotion Center (ECDC), Ministry of Education to serve the needs and interests of the elderly by encouraging lifelong learning and strengthening values and sustainable development of the elderly organization. Additionally, computer instruction has been provided for the elderly by the "Old People Playing Young Club: OPPY". This club aimed to disseminate knowledge and skills in computers and the internet for the elderly. For accommodation, the housing component in Thailand consists of housing and care as well as facilities that cover 4 basic needs. Furthermore, health services, physical therapy, religious activities, hobbies, cultural and recreational activities were provided for elderly in 21 state housing estates.

Elderly welfare fund, the career and income care, has been established by the Community Development Institute (Public Organization) which set up a project based on the principle that the elderly are the main leaders in determining and making decisions the welfare management. Social and recreational services include elderly clubs, a group of the elderly who have a common interest and ideology in the development of their quality of life, especially the quality of physical, mental and social development. This club funded directly by the Elderly Council and the Ministry of Public Health. However, the management and implementation is mainly the elderly. Importantly, the elderly club works as a network that make the elderly work stronger. Moreover, multi-purpose center for the elderly is the elderly community organization to provide health, social, mental and intellectual activities that is the community based use for long-term care services and cognitive services. Community Center for the Elderly is another form of the free social services relating to physical therapy, occupational therapy, recreation and religious activities. Because temple is the center of community activities, the elderly service center was founded in temple to encourage the community participation in caring of the elderly. The Elderly Fund aimed to support the project related to elderly organizations and institutes working for the elderly to protect, encourage and support the elderly to have the potential, stability and good quality of life. It can be suggested from all of the above that we need several professionals to work collaboratively in social supports of the elderly activities. We supposed that the Teachers’ Council of Thailand and the Social Work Professions Council can play key role in social services of the elderly.
Who are involved in elderly health care?

An ageing population tends to have a higher prevalence of chronic diseases, physical disabilities, mental illnesses and other co-morbidities. The health needs and health related problems of elderly people cannot be viewed in isolation. Prevention and control of health problems of elderly necessitates a multifaceted approach incorporating active collaboration of health professionals. In this issue we discuss the four main pillars of health care services which consisting of health promotion, prevention and control of diseases, medical treatment and rehabilitation that includes Thai traditional medicine and alternative medicine. It is important to recognize that even when living with chronic conditions, and being dependent on others for some activities, older people want to feel well and be as healthy as possible. So it is increasingly important to support older people to maintain and regain independence and participate in health promoting activities. This encompasses their emotional and social health as well as physical. According to the medical and public health services provided by the Elderly Act 2003 and the National Elderly Plan No. 2 (2002 - 2564) provide specific channels for the elderly. The district health promotion hospitals offer community-based health care program based on the concept. "Care Partner" consists of people in the area. Home Care is another service for the elderly. It is suitable for elderly patients who are not in the severe condition and uncomfortable to travel to the hospital. Elderly Care Volunteer Program (PDO), a project aimed to solve the problem of elderly caregivers by seeking health volunteers in the community volunteered to serve as caregivers for the rehabilitation of the elderly in the community. Supporting older people to remain as healthy as possible in the community requires health professionals to work together. Interprofessional collaboration that goes across agencies as well as disciplines is essential in providing a seamless and effective service to older people. There is an extensive range of disciplines involved in supporting older people in the community some of which have been highlighted including medical doctor, dentist, pharmacist, physiotherapist, public health officer, dietarian, medical technologist, nurse and veterinarian.

1. Environmental management and public services for the elderly

The environmental management for the elderly should be concerned about the changing environment and the condition of the elderly. The good environment for elderly should prevent conditions that affect respiratory illnesses and allergies. Furthermore, it could reduce factors that cause accidents in both in home and outside that causes risks and consequences of falls in the elderly. Importantly, the concept of increasing the duration of existence must change to that how to make the elderly happy. The quality of life is something that can be achieved by creating an environment promoting social interaction. The way to prevent loneliness and separation included loneliness residential decoration or design needs to take into account the entrance should open to the street. It must be ensured that there are areas where the link can interact with each other, such as gated houses. Furthermore, creating environments can be designed to reduce stress or create opportunities for recovery from stress, such as green space allocation, beautiful landscaping and adding natural daylight. The good environment has to enhance the well-being of the elderly by focusing on safety. Therefore, residential and environmental design for the elderly should be carefully considered because excessive design can result in worse effects rather than the good conditions. In our opinion, architects and engineers are needed to work together in order to achieve the right environment for the elderly.
design and management of environment that suit the well-being of body, mind and society of the elderly. In term of public services, Thailand by the Ministry of Transportation has the policy in helping the elderly about the vehicle fare by discounting the half price fare of train, BTS and MRT. Additionally, the Thai Airways has 15% of the domestic fare reduction.

2) **Strategic approaches necessary for the happy aging society via interprofessionals**

To build the happy ageing society in Thailand, the key strategy should rely on interprofessionals collaboration by means of interprofessional education. Based on the WHO Framework, curricular and educator mechanisms help interprofessional education succeed, as well as institutional support, working culture, and environmental elements that drive collaborative practice. The framework incorporates actions that leaders and policymakers can take to strengthen interprofessional education and collaborative practice for the improvement of elderly care. At the national level, positive health professions education and health systems actions are pointed to that could synergistically drive more integrated health workforce planning and policy making. Competency-based approaches to interprofessional education have developed in parallel to competency-based approaches within the health professions. However, it could be established in non-health professionals who involved in aged care. These have emerged in response to the limitations of learning outcomes related to knowledge and attitude-based methods. The Interprofessional Collaborative Practice Competency Domains consisted of 1) Values/Ethics for Interprofessional Practice 2) Roles/Responsibilities 3) Interprofessional Communication and 4) Teams and Teamwork.

A central part of choosing learning activities is a core interprofessional curriculum plan, this integrates required curricular components.
FIGURE 2: A Framework for the development of Interprofessional Education Values and Core Competencies

The organization of health has made a commitment to the overall goal of ensuring that all health professions, students there acquire interprofessional competencies. Four more specific goals drive a “learning spiral” conceptualizes around two dimensions: building teamwork competencies through a sequence of “prepare, think, practice, and act” and transforming ways of knowing from absolute to transitional, independent, and contextual stages. The framework draws from several carefully selected approaches to adult learning (Blue, Mitcham, Smith, Raymond, & Greenberg, 2010; Medical University of South Carolina, 2007). As they progress through the four stages of the learning cycle, students acquire, apply and demonstrate their interprofessional teamwork competencies in increasingly complex learning settings.

Figure 3: Conceptual framework for advancing interprofessional education.
Reference


