

Survey of Medical Seeking of Tumor Patients in Macao SAR

Abstract

According to the data issued by WHO, the aging population is greatly increasing. It is predicted that in the year 2020, there will be altogether 30,000,000 existing cases of tumors. In other words, there are about 1,500,000,000 new cases every year, and the number of patients who die of tumors annually is about 10,000,000. The increasing rate of tumor patients is 73% in developing countries while that in developed countries is about 29%. Therefore, we can see that tumor is the number one killer in the new century. The whole world is trying hard to find better ways of treatment to predict, control and cure tumors. The statistical data shows that every five seconds there is a person who dies of tumors. In Macao, there is a person who dies of tumors every thirty hours. This shows that the tumor situation in Macao is also very serious. In recent years, the number of tumor patients is also increasing. Tumor has already been the number one killer in this enclave. At present, there are 4000 tumor patients in Macao, and the age of people suffering from cancer is decreasing. There are about 400 people who die of cancer every year, and the death age is between 30 and 60. Not only does cancer make one lose one's life, it can also bring great suffering and burden to one's family. This research adapts convenience sampling to gather information or data about tumor patients' consultation or treatment behavior. The content is divided into two parts – the first part is to inquire the patients' treatment behavior, and to try to understand the patients' needs, and situation by means of questionnaires. Moreover, it also tries to interpret the history, the development and the present system of healthcare in Macao. The second part is about policy suggestion by means of interview. The main point is to interview the professionals about health hygiene and policy making. The aim is to try to understand the social strategy on tumor treatment, to care about treatment improvement and welfare problems as well as to suggest policy or strategy for the present and future treatment. Hopefully, all these suggestions can enhance the progress of the strategy of the government, and bring out the most possible means of health care system for Macao citizens as well as to give substantial support for the tumor patients so as to match the SAR government to improve the quality of life of the Macao tumor patients.

In Geneva, on the 1st of July, 2002, WHO announces that we should make better use of our present knowledge, and has already proved that by means of effective and economical methods, millions of tumor patients can be prevented and be treated. No matter whether a country is poor or rich, we should adapt effective methods to face and fight against tumor. However, nowadays, people pay more attention on tumor treatment than tumor prevention. The president of WHO, Dr. GH Brundtland, points out in one of the declarations that “no matter what resources a country had, a well-designed

management system can help to improve the occurrence of tumor of a country and the survival situation of tumor patients.” This control method can be improved or changed according to a country’s economic situation and cultural customs. Generally speaking, people are not alert to have regular physical check-up. This can be a timing bomb for the government and oneself’s medical expenses.

After the return of Macau to China, the Macau government has undergone a medical system reform. The SAR Medical Bureau has adapted the American Leung’s Consultation Company (RML Associates) in 2000 to evaluate the system. On 9th October, 2001, the government officially announced the report ‘New Millennium, New Macao – the Evaluation and Research of the Macao Medical System’. The report consists of 277 pages, and is divided into five sections. It describes in detail the present, the past and the future Macao medical system. The report also evaluates the research on the Macao medical treatment system, finance, law, and the development of Chinese and western medicine. At the same time, 215 reform suggestions are raised. On page 272, special attention is paid to the increase in medical cost. The consultation company estimated that by 2009, the cost of health care will increase to MOP 3,770,000,000 which shows the pressure brought by the aging population. On the other hand, it brings out the problem that the able bodies should pay for their own medical expenses. This drew the attention of the whole Macao population. According to the present medical system, tumor patients have the right of free transferal and free treatment outside Macao. But whether tumor patients can still have this right after the reform of the medical system, is a worrying problem for the tumor patients. Based on the research results, five analytical sections are brought out – personal data, treatment behavior of the tumor patients, the illness situation of tumor patients, medical expenses and treatment budget, and the evaluation on the government medical service and medical health care system. The result is quite close to the annual report of the 2003 of Macao tumor cases of the Macao Medical and Illness Prevention Bureau. Out of the 25 tumor subjects, 28 % of the female patients have breast cancer while 24% of them have nasopharynx carcinoma. The recovery rate of these patients can be quite high if early treatment is given. As a result, the mortality rate is low as well. Nasopharynx carcinoma is a common fatal tumor in China. The Canton region of China possesses the greatest number of nasopharynx carcinoma patients in the world, especially in the Canton Province. Inhabitants of Cantonese speaking dialect have the highest infected rate – in fact, the highest in the world, so it is also called ‘Canton Carcinoma’. The prevalent age range is between 17 and 74, that is, the average age is 42.24. The highest prevalent age range of tumor patients is between 40 and 50. 60% of these patients can survive more than ten years after the recovery. On the other hand, it is quite common that tumor patients may also have depression problem. Consequently, their quality of life is also low. The communication among family

members and interpatient organization is important. The support from friends and family is the main support for tumor patient community. This can also enhance the hope and dignity of the patients. WHO declares that 1/3 of the newly discovered tumors can be prevented, and another 1/3 tumor cases can be cured if they are discovered early. The remaining 1/3 can just be treated so as to minimize the symptoms.

Therefore, the interview part of the proposed strategy is based on the situation and the medical treatment of the patients. Chiefly speaking, it is about the treatment strategy of the tumor patients. It includes the financial support from the government, the treatment methods and the improvement strategy. The professional interviewees have been paying attention to the situation of the tumor patients. They have also been helping to improve the treatment methods and the social strategy. The result of the research is that people from all walks of life all agree that the government should pay attention on tumor prevention and hope that the government will build up a better treatment system with a higher quality so as to meet the demand of Macao citizens. They also hope that the management system of the two hospitals will merge and the resources should be well spread between the two hospitals instead of just stressing on the government itself. The level of the treatment should also be improved, and a basic concrete strategy should be built up. The idea that the able people should pay for their medical treatment can be brought out and discussed. On the other hand, both the civil servants and citizens are all caring for the construction of the third hospital in the outlying island. It is suggested that Tumor Prevention and Specialist Group should be erected in the Disease Prevention and Control Center so as to centralize the work of tumor prevention. As a result, early diagnosis as well as early treatment can be enhanced. It is necessary to provide suitable professional psychological counseling to the patients and their family. Support and transferal services are also essential. To know more about social support can help to improve the quality of life of the patients. Furthermore, the Macao SAR government is going to promote the bill of medical treatment and health care financing system. It is a very important and sensitive issue. Due to the aging population and the increase in the cost of government medical treatment, the gathered-finance system is necessary. People from all walks of life all agree that before the establishment of any strategies, it is necessary to gather public views. Now, it is the right time to gather information from all these aspects to improve the net of free-medical treatment. First of all, we can adapt the different levels of medical subsidies or bring in medical insurance system for every citizen so as to make the best use of the resources of the government.

Every one must pass through the path of birth, aging, illness, and death, so health care has naturally become an important issue for every government to handle. There are a lot of problems in the Macao health care system. Generally, the inhabitants care a lot about medical treatment and medical technology while the government pays

more attention on the reasonable use of medical resources and the building up of confidence in medical treatment among the public. All these have become the important point of the government policy. Although there is a difference from the point of view between the government and the public, both sides carry the same problem. Hopefully, it is necessary for both the government and the non-government organization to work together so as to develop and study other aspects of tumors and to investigate the inter-relation between the social welfare on tumor patients and Macao medical health care reform. If a reasonable, long-term medical system can be set up at an early stage, and to ensure that every improved item can have reasonable resources in addition to other necessary strategies, then all the passive strategies can be changed to active ones. If only with reasonable medical improvement, the pressure of aging can be changed to a better medical system with better treatment. This interaction may lead us to a healthier and more progressive society, thus hoping to raise the attention of the public on tumors.

Keywords:

Tumor Patients .Medical Seeking. Healthcare Reform. Health care financing