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Exploring the experience of phantom limb syndrome and acceptability of acupuncture intervention to lower limb amputees

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Purpose: Phantom limb syndrome (PLSd) is a frequent chronic complication post amputation and is difficult to manage with conventional medicine. Acupuncture has been shown to be effective in the management of other chronic pain conditions but little is known about the effectiveness of acupuncture for the management of PLSd. The study is nested in a larger study evaluating the feasibility of acupuncture for treating PLSd and aimed to explore the experience of PLSd and establish the acceptability of acupuncture intervention to treat PLSd.

Methods: Study design comprised of a case study approach using multiple cases. One off semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of 15 lower limb amputees 1-3 months post-surgery, with past or current experience of PLSd. Interviews explored participants’ experience of PLSd and perceived acceptability of acupuncture intervention. Framework analysis was used to analyse data.

Results: 6 key themes were identified during analysis; suffering (prior to amputation), acceptance and coping with the loss of a limb, real and physical phantoms, living with a phantom, being informed about PLSd, acupuncture acceptability. Additionally, outcome measures for the feasibility study were substantiated for ease of completion and relevance. Acupuncture was generally considered an acceptable intervention regardless of positive or negative past experience and few concerns were expressed. Local needling of the residual limb was considered acceptable. PLSd was perceived as a real and physical pain and participants used numerous and often metaphorical descriptions. PLSd frequently disrupted sleep and negatively affected wellbeing and mood.

Conclusion: The study contributes to existing evidence exploring the experience of PLSd and identified that PLSd is a bothersome and annoying condition which affects quality of life. Findings suggest that amputees suffering from PLSd would be willing to try a complementary medicine (acupuncture) approach to help manage this condition.

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Establishment of Online education portal: HACMK - Chinese medicine personnel database

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Purpose: In accordance with the Government’s direction to further the development of Chinese medicine (CM) in Hong Kong and as one of the accredited Continuing Medical Education (CME) Programme Providers for Chinese Medicine Practitioners (CMPs) to advocate and promote CM training, Hospital Authority is devoted to develop an online education portal - Hospital Authority Chinese Medicine Kinetics (HACMK) for promulgation of Knowledge, Information and Education in Chinese medicine and Integrative medicine. HACMK serves as an effective channel to complement onsite training which aims to enhance personnel training and professional development of CMPs. Comprehensive training e-Portfolio of CMPs are maintained in manpower database to facilitate personnel identification for future CM service development.

Methods: With the advanced information and communication technologies, HACMK strives to enhance operational efficiency in programme management and e-Portfolio management. To cope with operational and training needs for three years in-service training programme of the 18 Chinese Medicine Centre for Training and Research (CMCTRs) in Hong Kong, HACMK has tailored to develop CMCTR Management module in administrating, evaluating and monitoring the progress and performances of trainees across all types of training activities. Besides, HACMK provides a comprehensive online learning and collaboration platform designed specifically for continuing education. It enables delivery of a more effective learning experience through blended learning online collaboration tools which can increase learner engagement and improve outcomes.

Results: Established an online education portal with interactive multimedia centre, maintained user e-portfolio and customized CMCTR administration module to achieve operational efficiency in programme and user management.

Conclusion: Online education portal – HACMK expands access to Chinese medicine information and education for everyone at everywhere, facilitates nurturing of CMPs, promotes continuous education and pave path for mobile learning. Establishment of the centralized database for CMPs can stimulate Chinese Medicine service development planning and optimizing resource allocations.

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