CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusions of the study are presented in two parts: summary and recommendations.

Summary

This descriptive research examined cognitive status among the elderly in Natawee District, and investigated the relationships of selected factors with cognitive status. The subjects were 170 elderly aged 65 years and older, living in Natawee District, Songkhla province, Thailand. A multistage sampling technique was used in recruiting the subjects. The interviews-based questionnaires including demographic data, in addition to the Chula Mental Test, Geriatric Depression Scale, and Chula ADL Index used in data collection.

The SPSS PC program was used to analyze the data. Frequency, mean, standard deviation, and range were examined to describe the distribution of data. Crude odds ratios and chi-square were obtained in examining the associations of each selected factors with cognitive status.

The results revealed that:

1. Chula Mental Test Scores (CMTS) among the subjects ranged from 9-19, with a mean (SD) of 16.94 (2.71). The level of cognitive impairment was 12.9 %.

The factors related to cognitive impairment. Twelve point nine percent of subjects had CMTS lower than 15, which suggests cognitive impairment.

2. Crude odds ratio of each selected variable for low cognitive status was computed. At the 0.05 significance level, incomes, depression, marital status, and instrumental activities of daily living were associated with cognitive status. At the 95% confidence interval, subjects with incomes greater than 1,000 baht/month were at 0.35 times the risk of cognitive impairment compared to those with incomes equal to or less than 1,000 baht. Subjects with depression were at 4.6 times greater risk of cognitive status than those without depression. Those who were married had 0.3 times less risk of cognitive impairment than those who were single, and subjects with an IADL score of less than 9 had 9.5 times higher risk of cognitive decline than those with IADL scores of 9. The results indicated that 4 factors including incomes at or below 1,000 baht/month, being single, having depression, and an IADL score of less than 9 were significantly associated with poor cognitive status.

Recommendations

Suggestions for nursing practice:

1. Incomes of 1,000 baht/month or lower, being single, depression, and an IADL score less than 9 were related to cognitive impairment in this study. This finding should serve as a guide for nurses to be aware that elderly with these factors are at higher risk of cognitive impairment.

2. The results delineated the negative effect of low level of physical activities and depression on cognitive status. However, it has been noted that these two variables can be treated to improve cognitive status. Promoting physical and social

activities, as well as providing interventions to prevent or reduce depression in elderly, should be carried out.

Suggestions for further studies:

1. This study should be repeated with a larger sample size. The statistical analysis of this study is limited because there were only 22 cases with cognitive impairment, compared to the 148 cases with normal cognitive levels, resulting in skewed distribution of cognitive scores.

2. A longitudinal study with a large sample size should be conducted to demonstrate a causal relationship between related factors and cognitive status.

3. This study could not demonstrate a causal relationship between IADL and cognitive status. IADL could be either a risk factor or a consequence of cognitive decline. Intervention studies should be conducted to demonstrate the effects of physical activities and exercise on reduction of depression, and enhancing cognitive status.