



APPLICABILITY OF BUDDHIST COUNSELING AND MEDITATION IN THE MINIMIZATION OF MENTAL DIFFICULTIES OF THE PATIENTS AFFECTED BY CHRONIC DISEASES

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Chronic diseases are conditions of long term illnesses with multiple morbidities, combined ailments, disabilities and serious complications which significantly reduce the quality of life of the patient. Most of these diseases are psychosomatic and mentality of the patient is affected by grief, suffering and sorrow. It has been suggested to have an association between depression and major chronic diseases such as asthma, arthritis, cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes and obesity. The mental difficulties have an impact on aggravating the symptoms of physical disease and it will in turn, further deteriorate the mental threshold of the patient turning on a vicious circle. This phenomenon is long underestimated due to the lack of understanding of the link between negative mental outcomes and physical disease. The objective of this study is to demonstrate the possibility of applying Buddhist counseling and meditation to minimize the mental difficulties of the patients caused by chronic conditions. The methodology of the study is based on primary data sources of Buddhist chronicles such as *dhōvanasutta*, *thikicchakasutta*, *vamanasutta* of *samanasagnavagga* of *tatiyapannasaka* of *anguttaranikaya*, and *cittavagga* of *dhammapada* and a short-term field experiment with 34 patients who attended a clinic held at Polonnaruwa District in 2014. Based on Buddhist counseling techniques, those patients were advised to be mindful of their condition and engage in *Anapanasati* meditation practices daily. The study revealed that some important concepts derived from Buddhist chronicles such as *Ariyadhōvana*, *Ariyavirecana*, and *Ariyavamana* can be used for mental purification of patients suffering from chronic conditions. Accordingly, mental difficulties of the patients can be determined as mental expressions of *sōka*, *paridēva*, *dukkha*, *dōmanassa*, *upāyāsa* as explained in chronicles; *dhōvanasutta*, *thikicchakasutta*, *vamanasutta*. Over a period of three months experiment results flagged that, the mental difficulties of the patient can be decreased and improved the prognosis of physical illness by applying the Buddhist counseling methods and meditation. It is concluded that sustainable outcomes can be achieved by combining Buddhist counseling techniques with meditation based on reality of life and physical body. Once the patient is trained to meditate on impermanence principle of the life, the reality of suffering can be understood systematically. However, extensive study on the subject is essential in formulating proper counseling methods to overcome the mental difficulties of the patients suffering from chronic diseases.

Keywords: *Buddhist philosophy, counseling, mental difficulties, chronic conditions*