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Title: A descriptive qualitative study: The experience of visually impaired people living with guide dogs in Hong Kong

ABSTRACT

The experience of living with guide dogs has great impacts on the lives of visually impaired people (VIP), especially in physical, psychological and social aspects. These three aspects are interrelated and have significant effects on the health of VIP. However, limited studies have examined the integration of the VIP's experience in these three aspects as well as using community resources. Meanwhile, studies which have investigated these so far have presented inconsistent results. In addition, the experience of VIP living with guide dogs in Hong Kong is still not fully understood due to the absence of relevant studies.

At present, only 35 guide dogs provide service throughout Hong Kong; in comparison, over 400 VIP are applying for this service. Along with the great demand for guide dog service, VIP living with guide dogs are still facing various challenges as a result of public misunderstanding and discrimination. Hence, this study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach to provide a more comprehensive understanding of VIP on the three impacts mentioned above, perceived roles of guide dogs and their views on community resources. Eleven VIP living with guide dogs, excluding those in the matching period within 28 days, participated in individual semi-structured face-to-face interviews. Afterwards, data were analysed by thematic analysis. Five themes on the experience of living with guide dogs emerged. Living with guide dogs is a life-changing experience, with both benefits and drawbacks. Recommendations pertaining to healthcare services and related organisations are made, and suggestions for future studies are presented.