

ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to test the applicability of Wallston's modified social learning theory (1989) in predicting health habits of Chinese elderly patients with non-insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus. The predictive power of the salient social cognitive variables of the theory across two time points was also examined. At Time 1, 191 Chinese elderly patients (117 males and 74 females) with non-insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus were interviewed. Healthful habits practiced by the elderly participants were assessed and two underlying dimensions, diabetes-related and preventive health habits, were identified. Results showed that participants' overall, diabetes-related, or preventive health habits were determined by their health value, self-efficacy, and the health locus of control constructs, but not by their demographic or medical characteristics. However, results did not support the moderator effects of the cognitive constructs suggested by Wallston (1989). Both health value and self-efficacy emerged as the most reliable determinants of health habits. Internal health locus of control was found to be another significant predictor for both general and preventive health habits, while doctor health locus of control individually exerted its positive effect on general and diabetes-related health habits. Follow-up telephone interviews were conducted to assess the participants' health habits six months later. Results demonstrated that health habits were generally stable across the two measurement time points. After controlling health habits at Time 1, health value and self-efficacy predicted health habits practice at six months later. Some demographic variables and social cognitive factors accounted for a large amount of the variances of healthful habits for Time 1 and six-month follow-up. Results illustrated the significance of considering the specificity of assessment tools on

cognitive variables and target population. Research and practical implications of the current study were also discussed.