

Non-pharmacological interventions for pain management in nursing homes

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Background

Even though pharmacological interventions often have limited therapeutic effect and compromises activities of daily living, and may even cause adverse, potentially fatal, side effects for residents¹⁻², non-pharmacological interventions for pain management in nursing homes are seldom used. One explanation might be, that the non-pharmacological interventions may not be developed with the target groups and therefore not practical, feasible, or e.g. even not accepted by the residents. Therefore, the aim of this study was to collaboratively develop a practical and feasible toolkit with non-pharmacological pain management interventions for nursing homes.

Methods

In a first step we created a list of nonpharmacological interventions based on (1) the international literature; (2) already used interventions in a nursing home and from the residents as well as (3) (inter-) national expert's suggestions. Second, nursing home staff ranked the interventions focusing on the importance for nursing home residents. We identified the evidence for each intervention, by using eleven evidence-based websites or conducting rapid reviews. For each intervention we extracted data on e.g. instructions for use, indication, strength of evidence. After that, workshops were held in which residents as well as nursing home staff with different qualification took part. There each intervention was discussed e.g. regarding acceptance, feasibility, and which resources are needed, based on GRADE criteria³. One more meeting was held, on which final feedback was given by nursing home staff, managers as well as residents.

Results

The first step resulted in a list that comprised 50 interventions. They were ranked by the nursing home staff starting with empathic communication followed by e.g. allowing rest, exercises. In the workshops with the staff two nursing managers, four registered nurses, of which one is a pain nurse in training, five social care workers and one physiotherapist participated. Among that six residents involved. After that a lay-friendly toolkit was designed.

Conclusions

In this study we collaboratively develop a practical and feasible toolkit for implementing non-pharmacological pain management interventions in nursing homes. This toolkit will be freely available for German speaking nursing homes. Due to the fact, that staff as well as residents were involved in the development of the toolkit, the reality of nursing home practice could be incorporated. Furthermore, the perspective from the residents, gave highly valuable insights into their perspectives.

Relevance for patient care

This toolkit can serve as a base for residents, relatives as well as nursing home staff, to decide collaboratively how to manage pain in the nursing home. Moreover, we believe, that this toolkit can help residents as well as staff, to use non-pharmacological interventions as preferred first-line treatment as recommended internationally.



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