

Older People's Management of Persistent Pain

A Pilot Study

Background

Almost half of older people living in the community suffer from persistent pain but few studies focus on how older people define or cope with pain.

Aim

To identify the experiences of a group of older people.

Participants

Five women and three men aged 83 to 89 years with persistent pain living in the community.

Methodology

The participants were invited to join a focus group in June 2008. The discussion was tape-recorded and transcribed. A thematic approach was used to analyse data.

References:

Crome P., Main C.J., Lally F.(2007), (Editors), *Pain in Older People*. Oxford University Press.

Schofield P (2007), (Editor), *The Management of Pain in Older People*. Sage.

Results

Two themes, defining pain and approaches to pain management with sub-themes were analysed.

Pain

- Was seen as a nuisance taking over life.
- Catching individuals unawares.
- A hurt, affecting sleep.
- Participants felt awful, depressed, tearful, weary.
- Pain was debilitating, rendering them reluctant to move.

Pain Management

Depended on:

Personal Coping

- Cultural remedies influenced by childhood.
- Prayer
- Cultural hardiness, this generation as more stoic

We lived through the war

When I was a lad I gashed my leg, it cost 5 shillings for 4 stitches, didn't numb it or anything

- Social contacts for learning coping from others in pain and as a distraction

When my grandchildren come I don't seem to have any aches or pains

- Distraction, using television, music, reading or a glass of wine
- Talking to friends about pain sometimes

Talking largely about other things helps, it's the fact that someone is listening to you and you're doing the same for them

Or Support From Health Workers

- Drug management
- Supporting personal coping
- Complimentary therapies
- Education

My doctor says take pain killers regularly

Discussion

Older people rely mainly on their own resources, family and friends to manage their pain.