

Nurses' Knowledge and Barriers Regarding Pain Management

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Purpose: The purpose of this study was to identify Polish nurses' experiences and perceptions about the barriers to postoperative pain management in older adults.

Design: The study was conducted using a dedicated questionnaire.

Methods: Eleven hospitals participated in this study. The project involved 1,602 nurses working on surgical hospital wards. A descriptive exploratory survey and a qualitative content analysis were used.

Findings: Access to journals on evidence-based practice related to pain assessment and management in elderly patients was assessed as less important by the respondents. Knowledge drawn from the media and scientific and medical journals was assessed by the respondents as unsatisfactory. The greatest barrier to nurses was that scientific articles are published in English.

Conclusions: Nurses' awareness of evidence-based practice increases with their education. Among the key problems is the lack of available professional publications in the Polish literature, ignorance of English, shortage of time, and lack of support from chief physicians of the ward.

Key Words: barriers, nursing care, pain management, advanced age.

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Conflicts of interest: None to report.

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1089-9472/\$36.00

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jopan.2017.03.005>

PAIN IS ONE OF THE MAIN postoperative adverse outcomes and, if ineffectively treated, can lead to acute neurohormonal changes, anxiety, sleep deprivation, and higher rate of complications.¹ Pain management in postsurgical patients is a care process of highly variable quality and in spite of technological advancements, growing body of knowledge, and research and availability of analgesics, it is often undertreated.² Although evidence-based practice (EBP) has been developing in the world for nearly three dozen years, it is still considered a groundbreaking idea in medicine.³ EBP is an approach in which decisions about health care should be based on the best available, up-to-date, and valid evidence. Finding, appraising, applying, and evaluating research evidence are essential components of EBP.¹ Consequently, practices of little effectiveness and with unreasonable costs should be discarded, whereas

those based on proven, reliable, and current results of research studies should be consistently used in everyday practice.³ The application of EBP related to acute pain is on the increase all over the world. The pressure on nurses of all levels to use research results on a daily basis during nursing practice as a foundation for decision-making is on the rise as well.^{4,5} However, some studies show that practicing nurses rarely use research and rather rely on other sources of information like their own and their colleagues' practical knowledge, knowledge gained from their nursing education, nursing literature, and guidance from experts.⁶⁻⁹ The purpose of this study was to identify Polish nurses' experiences and perceptions about the barriers to postoperative pain management in older adults.

Methods

Design

A mixed method, descriptive exploratory survey, and a qualitative content analysis were used to describe Polish nurses' experiences and perceptions about the barriers to postoperative pain management in older adults. Each hospital manager was asked for permission to collect data in his/her organization and to provide a letter of permission to gather data. Two weeks after sending the package to the hospital manager, the hospital manager was contacted by the researcher regarding the data collection approval. Twenty-five Polish hospitals were randomly selected into the study; however, only 17 hospitals agreed to participate. The head nurse (or the coordinator) distributed the questionnaires to nurses. The time needed to complete the questionnaire was estimated at 40 minutes. The nurse coordinator, having collected all questionnaires, was asked to send them back to the researcher.

Study Procedures

The data were collected at multiple sites for more than 1 year. A total of 2,000 nurses working on surgical wards participated in the study. The respondents were informed that the study was anonymous and that the data collected would be used exclusively for scientific purposes. Participation in the study was voluntary. Consent was also obtained from the managers of each facility.

Questionnaire Development

The study used a questionnaire collecting demographic data of our own design and the Polish version of Suwanraj's questionnaire—the Acute Pain Evidence-Based Practice Questionnaire for Gerontological Nursing.¹⁰ The questionnaire contained 111 questions evaluating the nurses' knowledge of fact-based (scientific evidence-based) practice related to pain assessment and pain itself and the problems encountered in nursing practice in connection with acute pain management.¹¹ The Polish version of the tool was analyzed in terms of factor accuracy, internal coherence, and discriminating strength. Reasoning on the internal consistency of the questionnaire scales was performed by calculating Cronbach's α coefficient of internal consistency. Cronbach's reliability coefficient values of 0.8 and more were accepted as values confirming the reliability of the scale.

The Polish-language version of the questionnaire was prepared by translating it from English into Polish and then back-translating by two independent translators. The language adaptation and use of the tools for the present study took place with the written permission of the author.

Ethical Considerations

The study was carried out on the approval of the study protocol by the Independent Bioethics Committee for Scientific Research of the Medical University of Gdańsk, approval number NKBBN/238/2012. No data was collected until informed consent was obtained from each responder.

Statistical Analysis

Data from the Acute Pain Evidence-Based Practice Questionnaire for Gerontological Nursing were analyzed using STATISTICA 10.0 data analysis software system (www.StatSoft.com). Descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation (SD), were used to describe the demographic data. The percentage of correct and incorrect answers for each item was calculated. The significance of differences between the two groups was examined by means of the Mann-Whitney U test. The significance of differences between more than two groups was measured by means of the Kruskal-Wallis test. To establish the correlation,

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