



Longevity: Chronic Pain and Active Aging and Carer's Support

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DESCRIPTION

Medical advancements have significantly increased life expectancy. Indeed, longevity comes with challenges, such as more chronic illnesses because of advanced age. Despite suffering from chronic pain, active aging, can be achieved by utilizing more health promotion activities. This article explores the aspects of longevity, chronic pain, and active aging to promote healthier lifestyles in elders.

Longevity

Longevity has become a hot topic as people live longer lives, and it is defined as “the achievement of a long life”. People are living longer lives, all thanks to technological advancements in healthcare, improved living environments, and better healthcare education. Indeed, there is a growing interest in the expedition for longevity and promoting healthier lifestyle choices. The World Health Organization has recognized longevity as a priority issue for action and established healthy aging strategies for elders worldwide.

For instance, they call for “universal health coverage” to deliver high-quality healthcare and relieve the financial burden on the poorer, older populations (World Health Organization, 2023). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also provides guidelines and tips for healthy aging. Researchers, including our research team, are trying to better understand elders' habits and preferences and design suitable healthy aging strategies for a broader range of elders.

Chronic pain

The prevalence of chronic pain is high among older adults and is closely associated with aging. The International Association for the Study of Pain defines chronic pain as “pain that recurs or persists longer than 3 months. Physical conditions, such as arthritis, back pain, and headache, slowly emerge as a person ages. Besides, the psychological effects of chronic pain are often neglected, especially in the aging population. Elders often experience social isolation, lower self-confidence, and a lower sense of independence. Thus, they can lead to

severe mental health conditions, including anxiety, depression, stress, and low mood.

The use of drug methods is most common in chronic pain management. The side effects of drug methods might be intimidating and older adults often become fearful of these effects on their bodies. Therefore, they may stop/reduce using pain relief drugs without seeking advice from health care professionals. Low medication adherence is common among older adults. Sometimes, they may forget to take and refill their medications on time. Additionally, they may not understand the instructions clearly and mix them with other medications. Thus, making their pain situations more severe and risking their lives.

To help older adults manage their pain, our research team recommends practicing non-pharmacological methods, such as music therapy, aromatherapy, exercise, visual stimulation, and humor-relaxing techniques. These non-drug strategies are much more appealing to older adults as they have greater autonomy in managing chronic pain. And they do not have to worry about possible adverse effects associated with drug use. Also, they can engaging in these practices with their peers and family members, which can boost their mood and develop better inter-personal relationships with others.

Active aging

Active aging means living longer and happily in the community. It is also known as “healthy ageing,” which is “the process of developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables wellbeing in older age” (World Health Organization). Chronic pain is manageable by remaining active and consistent in practicing drug and non-drug strategies. Besides maintaining physical health and mobility, cognitive and emotional well-being is also as important.

To maintain psychological health, support from family members or carers is significant. Therefore, we have also developed interventions that involve elders practicing walking exercises with their family members. They can enhance intergenerational relationships by performing walking exercise together.

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CONCLUSION

Lifestyle factors are crucial to the aging process. Health care professionals are responsible for promoting happy and healthy aging. We must continue developing interventions to encourage

better lifestyle choices, such as being physically active and healthy dietary habits. Also, maintaining social connection *via* various health promotion programs and activities, and relieving burden and stress for caregivers in the caring process.