

Multimodal Pain Management for Chronic Pain in Older Adults



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Clinical Question

Chronic pain can greatly affect the quality of life of older adults and is compounded by multiple negative outcomes associated with that experience. Chronic pain also results in more complicated forms of physical activity and social engagement. As such, the use of multimodal pain management, consisting of both pharmacological (medications) and non-pharmacological (non-drug) therapies, has been explored by our organization as a potential way to achieve better outcomes compared to using traditional pharmacological modes of treatment alone. As estimated by the National Institute on Aging (2022), nearly half of all older adults living in the community experience chronic pain; this pain has the potential to lead to serious problems such as depression, loss of functional ability, and increased need for healthcare support. Furthermore, the use of medication alone to manage chronic pain can also create several adverse effects, including drowsiness, constipation, an increased risk of falls, and addiction to medications. Existing literature supports the use of non-pharmacological methods, such as physical therapy, exercise and mindfulness-based approaches, in addition to cognitive and behavioral therapies, to promote the effective management of chronic pain while simultaneously supporting the ability of older adults to maintain functional independence and improve their overall quality of life. The use of a multimodal approach also provides older adults with a greater degree of control over their chronic pain and may play a significant role in supporting feelings of empowerment among older adults who are experiencing chronic pain.