

Improving pain management in long-term care facilities

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Abstract:

Improving pain management in long-term care facilities has several unique barriers in comparison to the acute hospital setting. To address these barriers the Medical College of Wisconsin in Palliative Care Program began a project in 1996, initially working with 87 long-term care facilities, to improve pain management practices through a series of educational and quality improvement steps. This article will review the overall structure, results, strengths and weaknesses of this approach to improving pain management in this important site of clinical care. This article was excerpted from a thematic issue, "Promoting Better Pain management in Long-Term Care Facilities", Volume 3, Number 1, 2001 of the online journal Innovations in End-of-Life Care at < www.edc.org/lastacts/>.

Comments:

Strengths/uniqueness: The report provides a good outline of an approach used by an experienced team to educate staff in long-term care facilities, and improve pain management for all residents irrespective of the diagnosis.

Weaknesses: Physicians appear to have been excluded in this educational approach, although they are expected to approve recommendations made to them by nurses. Although target indicators were used and some results reported to demonstrate markers of success, these indicators did not necessarily prove improvement in actual pain management.

Relevance to Palliative Care: There is a challenge contained in this report to all long-term care facilities to assess their pain management practices, and consider an evaluation and process to improve existing circumstances.