

Grace Peterson Nursing Research Colloquium

Aug 23rd, 9:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Effective Pain Assessment Conducted by Nursing for Developmentally Disabled Clients: An Integrative Literature Review

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Silverman, Rebecca, "Effective Pain Assessment Conducted by Nursing for Developmentally Disabled Clients: An Integrative Literature Review" (2019). *Grace Peterson Nursing Research Colloquium*. 49.
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Effective Pain Assessment Conducted by Nursing for Developmentally Disabled Clients

An Integrative Review of Literature

Background:

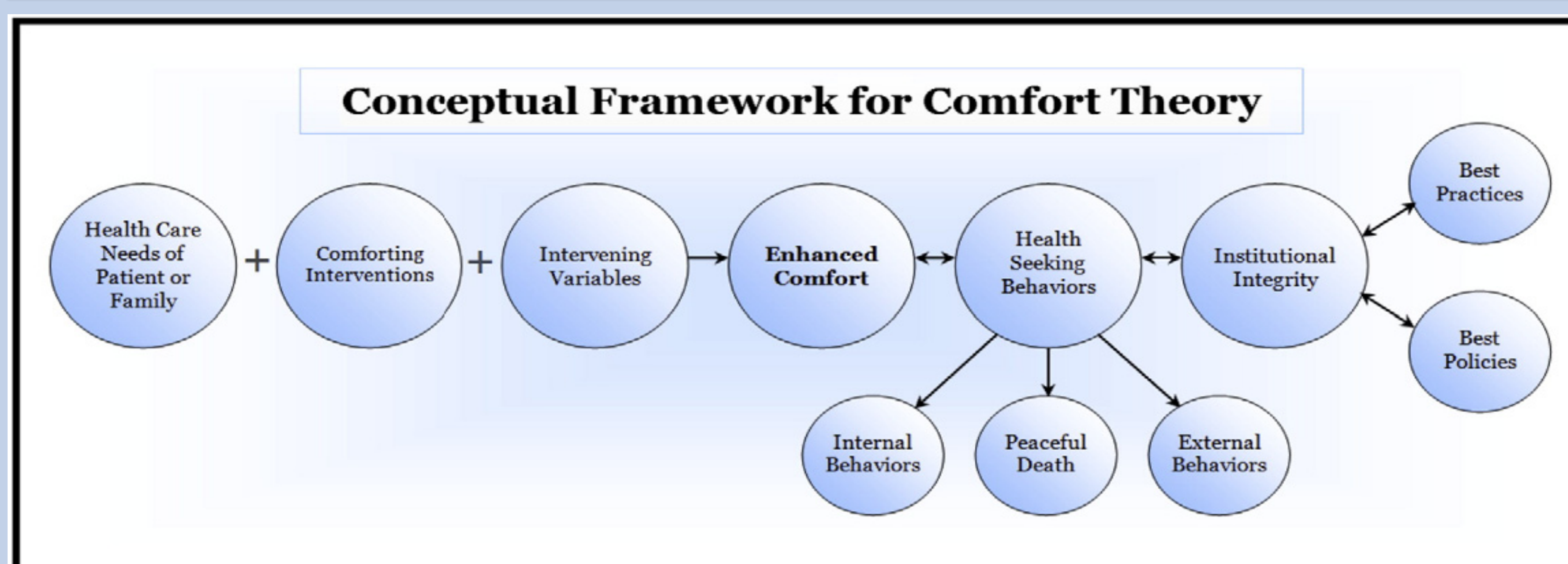
As students, nurses are taught to manage pain based on the feedback they receive from their patients. However, there is a gap in the teaching of pain management for individuals with cognitive impairments. Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) cannot be cared for in the same way that typically developed individuals are cared for (Ervin, Hennen, Merrick & Morad, 2014). An area of specific concern among this population is pain assessment, since the gold standard for pain assessment is self-report (Baldrige & Andrasik, 2010). Unfortunately, cognitively impaired patients often cannot provide a self-report of pain, making it difficult for nurses to manage their pain.

It is common for individuals with IDD to have comorbidities and other chronic medical conditions like cardiovascular disease, diabetes or renal failure (Baldrige & Andrasik, 2010). Furthermore, people in this population average 4.5 medical disorders per person (Beange, McElduff & Baker, 1995). Nurses are at the forefront of providing care and perform the majority of pain assessment in the hospital setting. Thus, it is important for nurses to learn effective pain assessment for people with developmental disabilities in order to successfully and compassionately manage their pain.

Research Question:

What methods of pain assessment are most effective for nursing to conduct to assess developmentally disabled clients?

Conceptual Framework



(Krinsky, Murillo & Johnson, 2014)

The main concept in this literature review is "pain assessment"; a significant responsibility in the hands of nurses. A nursing theory that relates to this literature review is the Comfort Theory by Katharine Kolcaba. Comfort is a fundamental need for all human beings and this middle-range theory emphasizes how nursing practice can promote patients' comfort needs (Krinsky, Murillo & Johnson, 2014). When we discuss pain management, nurses are satisfying patient's physical comfort needs. Kolcaba's theory should be at the forefront of nurse's minds when addressing the comfort needs of their patients.

Methods:

A computerized literature search was conducted using the Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL), PsychInfo, and PubMed databases. Several key words were used in combination when searching the literature, those key words include: *pain assessment, pain measurement and developmental disabilities.*

Inclusion criteria: Articles reviewed for this study were required to be available in English. They must have been peer-reviewed and a full-text version of the article must have been available either through the DePaul online database system or the Rosalind Franklin online database system. In addition, articles must have been related to the nursing or medical profession.

Exclusion criteria: Duplicate articles were excluded from the study, as well as those that did not relate to pain assessment in individuals with developmental disabilities. For example, articles examining pain assessment in individuals with other conditions, where mental retardation was not present, were excluded. Articles not relating to the nursing or medical profession were excluded, as well as articles that were not peer-reviewed, available in English or available with a full-text version.

Results & Discussion:

After reviewing 15 articles for this study, three techniques have been identified as useful to accurately assess pain in individuals with IDD: (1) caregiver reports, (2) behavioral pain checklists and pain scales, (3) a clinical pain nurse expert [also called a pain resource nurse].

Caregiver reports were found to be helpful since no one knows the individual better than their parents or close caregivers. Caregivers have the ability to teach nurses specific pain-related behaviors of their children and the signs to look for that indicate their child is in pain.

There are numerous pain checklists, scales and assessment tools available for cognitively impaired individuals who cannot self-report pain; this literature review addressed the assessment tools with significant findings for nonverbal individuals. Nurses should select the pain scale that fits their needs whether it's ease of use, addition of caregiver reports or level of pain the patient is experiencing.

Lastly, this literature review identified the role of a pain resource nurse (PRN). These nurses have the skill set and knowledge to understand pain assessment and management in specific populations. PRN's have the ability to recognize pain in nonverbal individuals, with the help of resources mentioned in this review; PRN's can improve the pain management in individuals with cognitive impairments while working alongside nurses and health care professionals.

Nursing Implications:

Nurses are at the forefront of providing care at the bedside, making pain management their responsibility and top priority. Detecting pain in individuals with IDD can be especially difficult, as pain-related behaviors may differ for everyone. Individuals with developmental delay who lack the ability to communicate verbally are "fully dependent on support professionals for the detection and accurate interpretation of nonverbal pain behavior" (Putten & Vlaskamp, 2011, p. 1). Nurses can take the information from this literature review and enhance their pain assessment skills in order to appropriately manage these individuals' pain instead of overlooking it like today's common practice.



Problem Statement:

Managing pain is a top priority for nurses and effective pain assessment is a critical nursing skill to master. Pain is generally self-reported (Baldrige & Andrasik, 2010), consequently making pain assessment with individuals who do not have the ability to self-report, very difficult. This integrative literature review will attempt to look at the research on pain assessment in this population and which pain assessment techniques are most effective for people with IDD. Every individual in pain should be relieved of their pain to the greatest degree possible; therefore, pain assessment in all populations must become a priority for health care professionals.