

Treating changed behaviours in dementia and appropriateness of medication use in residential aged care: Addressing research priorities of the Clinical Practice Guidelines for People with Dementia

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Background

Australian Clinical Practice Guidelines for Dementia (2016) identified the treatment of changed behaviours in people with dementia as a priority area for further research. Furthermore, there have been concerns regarding the appropriateness of medication use in residential aged care.

Objectives

- 1) Review interventions for changed behaviours in people with dementia and compare their effect size.
- 2) Examine appropriateness of medications and associations with quality of life and hospitalisations in residential aged care.

Method

A systematic review of reviews was completed to examine the effectiveness of different interventions for changed behaviours in people with dementia. The prevalence of psychotropic medications and potentially inappropriate medications (PIMs) was examined in the Investigating Services Provided in the Residential Environment for Dementia (INSPIRED) study. The INSPIRED study is a cross-sectional study of 541 participants living in residential aged care in Australia.

Results

Current evidence suggests functional analysis-based interventions should be considered as first line management of changed behaviours due to significant effect size, moderate quality evidence and lack of adverse events. Antipsychotics have a similar effect size, but high risk of serious adverse events. In the INSPIRED study, PIM and psychotropic medication use was high (83% and 71% respectively), including antipsychotic medications (25%), and was associated with lower quality of life and more frequent hospital admissions. The recent Clinical Practice Guidelines for Dementia recommend that psychotropic medication is not used as a first line treatment for changed behaviours, in favour of non-pharmacological approaches. The current findings provide further support for functional analysis-based interventions and show the associations between PIM use and resident outcomes in residential aged care.