

Abstract

Original Article

Ageing with Aches and Pains': Lived Experiences of the Elderly in Ghana

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Abstract

Background: Aging is associated with physiological and physical changes including musculoskeletal aches and pains. Studies have explored the phenomenon of aches and pains in the elderly to some extent. However, there is paucity of literature on the phenomenon of aches and pains among the Ghanaian elderly.

Objectives: This study sought to gain an in-depth understanding of aches and pain among the elderly in Ghana.

Methods: An exploratory descriptive phenomenological design was employed to conduct this at a tertiary physiotherapy department in Accra, Ghana. Purposive sampling was used to recruit elderly who were at least 60 years with musculo-skeletal pain. Individual interviews were conducted and transcribed verbatim. Data were saturated with 12 participants. The principles of content analysis were employed to analyse the data.

Findings: Themes generated were pain descriptions, causes of pain, pain effects, pain management (pharmacologic pain management and non-pharmacologic pain management) and challenges of living with pain. The Ghanaian elderly had aches and pains at different parts of their body and this impaired their mobility. Multiple diseases such as Diabetes and Hypertension impaired pain management.

Conclusion: The elderly and their care givers should be educated on physiological changes in the body as one ages that can contribute to pain and the effect of multiple diseases on pain management. Pain management among the elderly should be enhanced so that they can have a better quality of life.

Keywords: geriatric; musculo-skeletal; qualitative research; ageing; Ghana