

A qualitative study on the concerns, needs and lived experiences of community-dwelling older adults with chronic low back pain

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Abstract

Background: Chronic low back pain (CLBP) lasting for > 3 months is prevalent among community-dwelling older adults. While numerous quantitative studies have been conducted to investigate the epidemiology or treatment effectiveness in this population, no local qualitative research has investigated their concerns, needs and lived experiences, which affect CLBP self-management.

Purpose: To explore the perceptions and lived experiences of community-dwelling old adults with CLBP in Hong Kong.

Methods: Semi-structured interviews with 14 older adults with CLBP were conducted in Hong Kong. A 6-step thematic analysis was used to identify themes inductively. Data analyses were conducted using NVivo 12 Plus software.

Results: Seven themes were identified. Three themes were related to negative perceptions/experiences: (1) interferences of daily function (including sleep); (2) pessimistic attitudes toward their conditions/prognosis; and (3) self-perceived burden to families and avoidance of talking about their pain with families. Conversely, four positive themes were revealed: (1) maintaining their roles in families (e.g., housework); (2) experiencing supports from family and friends; (3) being contented despite CLBP; and (4) enjoying social activities in community centres.

Discussion: Although CLBP may negatively impact older adults, individual attitudes towards pain, as well as adequate social supports from family and friends influence older adults' attitude toward their pain and self-management. Relevant stakeholders (e.g., social workers, clinicians, family members, and peers) play important roles in helping older adults with CLBP to cope with pain experiences. Community centres can work with healthcare professionals to organize talks and activities to assist these people to effectively self-manage CLBP.



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