INFLUENCE OF THE PRESENCE OF PHYSICAL SIGNS IN CHRONIC PAIN PATIENTS ON CAREGIVERS’ PATIENT-CENTERED CARE AND EMPATHETIC BEHAVIOR

Emilie Paul-Savoie, Ph.D.
Université de Sherbrooke, École des sciences infirmières

INTRODUCTION / AIM

Although many studies support the benefits of empathy and patient centered care (PCC), their use in chronic pain management seems to be challenging and suboptimal. Since many patients with chronic pain do not display any visible physical signs and remain stoic when they feel pain, it is important to assess the impact of this factor on nurses and physicians’ behavior and approach style. The aim of this study was to investigated the influence of the presence of physical signs on caregivers’ PCC and empathetic behavior.

METHODS

Twenty-one nurses and 21 physicians participated in a descriptive-correlational study. All participants watched four videos of real patients (all women) with chronic pain and they had to explain the treatment plan that they would provide. These explanations were recorded and three external observers evaluated the levels of PCC (Sherbrooke Observation Scale of Patient-Centered Care – SOS-PCC) and the levels of the empathy (Reynolds Empathy Scale - RES) demonstrated by the nurses and physicians for each patient.

RESULTS

We divided the videos of patients in two groups: patients with and without visible physical signs of pain. Both SOS-PCC (27.25 vs 25.45; p<0.01) and RES (22.06 vs 19.64; p<0.01) means were significantly higher for the visible physical signs group.

DISCUSSION / CONCLUSIONS

The presence of physical signs in chronic pain patients is an important factor contributing to an increased use of PCC and empathy by nurses and physicians. These findings reinforce the relevance to develop training for nurses and physicians to raise the self-awareness of the influence of visible physical signs on their empathetic behavior and their approach style.

OTHER AUTHORS

Patricia Bourgault
Stephane Potvin
Sylvie Lafrenaye