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A Systematic Review of the Effectiveness and Experiences of Environmental and Behavioural Interventions in Reducing Falls in Older People with Visual Impairment

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Introduction

The rate of falls in older people with visual impairment is 1.7 times higher than within the general older population. A recent review has considered the evidence for occupational therapist-delivered environmental interventions in reducing falls generally (Clemson et al, 2008), but no reviews have been located which combine qualitative and quantitative evidence synthesis in considering meanings and outcomes for visually impaired elders.

Objectives

To describe the process and findings of an evidence synthesis investigating the effectiveness, meanings and appropriateness of environmental and behavioural interventions (EBIs) designed to reduce falls in older people with visual impairment

Description

Using Cochrane and Joanna Briggs Institute evidence synthesis methodology, a three stage process was used to identify relevant papers:

- i) Appropriate mesh terms and keywords were identified, and a search strategy developed
- ii) The search strategy was executed within databases including CINAHL, Pubmed, AMED, and PsychINFO
- iii) Abstracts of papers identified were reviewed in pairs according to prespecified criteria to determine if they met inclusion criteria

Full text copies of included papers were then obtained, and critically appraised using prespecified criteria.

Results

The synthesised findings of qualitative and quantitative review activities are combined for the purposes of this paper. There is limited evidence about the effectiveness of EBIs, or their meaningfulness for older visually impaired participants. The mechanism of falls prevention appears to be different for this subgroup of older people than within the general older population.

Conclusion

Whilst occupational therapists potentially have an important role in designing and delivering interventions to prevent falls involving older visually impaired people, more high quality research from both qualitative and quantitative paradigms is required to confirm this.

Contribution to the practice/evidence base of occupational therapy

This synthesis provides occupational therapists with a unique picture of both process and content to direct their work in preventing falls with older visually impaired people.

References

Clemson L, MacKenzie L, Ballinger C, Close J and Cumming RG (2008) Environmental interventions to prevent falls in community dwelling older people: A meta-analysis of randomized trials *Journal of Aging and Health* 20 (8) 954-71

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