

Towards an Elder-Friendly Future: Chronic Pain in the Oldest Old

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INTRODUCTION

Research shows that approximately 50% to 75% of adults over 85 regularly experience pain¹, therefore pain should affect 6 million or more older adults by 2030.

“Anywhere from 560 to 635 billion dollars a year is spent on health related problems related to pain”²

While this is known, pain in older adults is often overlooked and under researched. The goal of this research is to explore the pain management strategies and information behaviors in adult women 85 and older.

SPECIFIC AIMS

- 1) Look at the information behaviors of women over 85 with chronic pain
- 2) Evaluate attitudes towards pain management
- 3) Understand how remote technologies can aid pain management

METHODS

The study recruited ten older adult women (>85 years of age) living in an assisted living retirement community (n = 6) and living independently (n = 4) in Seattle. Participants self-identified as chronic pain survivors. We administered an audio recorded semi-structured interview for each participant. The data from these interviews was then coded with a percent agreement at 83% and a Kappa of 0.649.

RESULTS

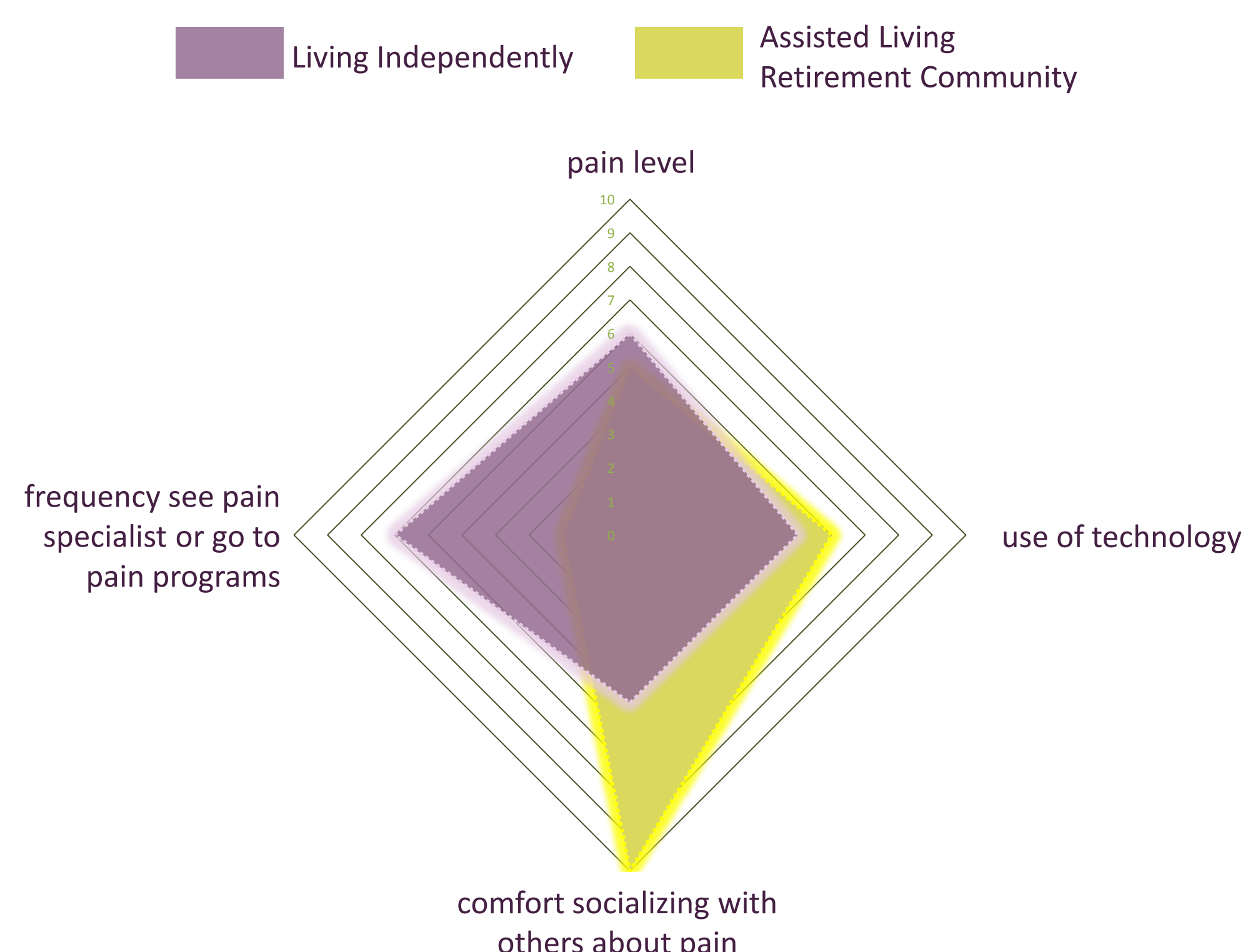
Pain Management

- Almost all pain management strategies in this study were unique (9 of 10) and discontinuous (8 of 10)
- Almost all (9 of 10) pain management strategies were found incidentally
- Participants sought nonpharmalogical pain management strategies (10 of 10)

Technology Use

- Searching online regarding pain management made participants feel informed and more articulate about their pain
- Certain web applications assisted older adults in their instrumental activities of daily living (e.g. grocery shopping)
- Using the computer gave older adults intellectual stimulation (e.g. online games)
- Searching online and/or talking about pain resulted in our participants feeling more positive and accepting of their pain

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN INDEPENDENT AND ASSISTED LIVING OLDER ADULTS



WHAT PARTICIPANTS HAD TO SAY

S10: “Sometimes you know better than the doctor how you feel”

S01: “Well I always look things up on the computer, so if somebody tells me to do a certain thing I will look it up and see whether it is beneficial or harmful”

S04: “Well I can say that it is disconcerting and difficult to have something I know is not right but not know what it is or can I find anyone in the medical world who can find what it is, that is a difficult place to be in life”

S03: “I have gone to a number of websites looking for information and I have also printed things that I have wanted to keep that help me understand what my discomfort is all about”

S01: “My doctor told me that things wear out and that you just can’t take care of them anymore”

IMPLICATIONS

- Society *must* have informed managers of pain who understand pain proactively, can discuss their pain articulately, and continuously apply their pain management strategy over time
- Finding ways to automate instrumental activities of daily living through technology and/or professional retirement home staff could lead to sustained pain management strategies
- Technology can be used as a passive and anonymous tool to learn about pain and pain management

REFERENCES

1. Cousins M. Pain Relief as a Human Right. Webcast, Global Day against Pain. 11th October 2004.
2. Committee on Advancing Pain Research, Care, and Education, Institute of Medicine. Relieving Pain in America: Blueprint for Transforming Prevention, Care, Education, and Research. Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2011



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