

Pain in Older Adults

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Globally our population is increasing. This is true also of the percentage of the population aged over eighty years. At the same time the percentage of the population under thirty is either decreasing or remaining static.

Examples of these changing demographics will be demonstrated.

The pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics seen in elderly patients are different and require caution with analgesic use. This should encourage us to explore all evidence based non-pharmacological options. A variety of non-pharmacological pain management strategies for the older person will be discussed. These include: movement and physical activity, traditional and complementary approaches and nutrition. The issues of managing pain in those aged individuals with dementia and cognitive impairment will also be briefly discussed.

With the decline in some countries of the nuclear family, traditionally offering care and support for elderly relatives, governments are being required to provide “aged care facilities”. The managers of these facilities need to be aware that good pain management improves care. Our advocacy here will be important.