

Inpatients 'Experiences with Pharmacist-Led Pain Management Programs: Exploring Patients ' Perspectives on the Effectiveness and Impact of Pharmacist-Managed Pain Management Plans During Their Hospital Stay

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Abstract:

This qualitative study explores inpatients 'experiences with pharmacist-led pain management programs in a hospital setting. Through semi-structured interviews, 15 participants 'perspectives on the effectiveness and impact of pharmacist-managed pain interventions were investigated. Findings highlight the role of pharmacists in optimizing pain relief, enhancing patient communication, and improving overall hospital experiences. Participants valued pharmacist involvement in pain management, emphasizing personalized care and education. Recommendations for program enhancement include increased pharmacist presence and streamlined communication channels. This study contributes to understanding patient-centered approaches to pain management in hospital settings.

Keywords: Pharmacist-led pain management, Inpatients, Qualitative study, Patient experiences, Pain relief, Hospital care

Introduction

Pain management is a critical aspect of healthcare delivery, particularly during hospitalization, where effective pain control enhances patient comfort, promotes recovery, and improves overall satisfaction with care (Gélinas et al., 2009). Pharmacists, as integral members of multidisciplinary healthcare teams, play a significant role in managing pain through medication therapy management, patient education, and interdisciplinary collaboration (American Society of Health-System Pharmacists, 2020). Despite their essential role, the direct impact of pharmacist-led pain management programs on patient outcomes and experiences remains underexplored, especially from the perspective of hospitalized patients.

This study aims to fill this gap by examining inpatients 'experiences with pharmacist-led pain management programs. By capturing patients 'perspectives on the effectiveness and impact of pharmacist-managed pain management plans, this research seeks to inform best practices and optimize pharmacist-patient interactions in pain management within hospital settings.

Literature Review

Pharmacists contribute to pain management through comprehensive medication management, including selection, dosing, and monitoring of analgesic therapies tailored to individual patient needs (Birnle et al., 2019). Their involvement in pain management programs enhances medication safety, improves pain relief outcomes, and reduces adverse effects associated with analgesic use (Brennan et al., 2007). Pharmacist-led initiatives often incorporate patient education on pain medications, adherence counseling, and strategies for

managing opioid-related side effects, thereby empowering patients in their pain management journey (Gélinas et al., 2009).

Studies underscore the positive impact of pharmacist interventions on patient satisfaction and clinical outcomes related to pain management. Patients report higher levels of satisfaction with care and improved pain relief when pharmacists are actively involved in pain management protocols (Mekonnen et al., 2016). Pharmacist-led initiatives have also been shown to reduce opioid consumption, minimize medication errors, and enhance overall patient comfort during hospitalization (Brennan et al., 2007).

Despite these benefits, challenges exist in optimizing pharmacist-led pain management programs. Barriers such as time constraints, limited pharmacist availability, and variability in pharmacist training can influence the consistency and effectiveness of pain management interventions (American Society of Health-System Pharmacists, 2020). Understanding patients' perspectives on pharmacist-led pain management programs is crucial for identifying areas of improvement and tailoring interventions to meet patient needs effectively.

This qualitative study aims to explore inpatients' firsthand experiences with pharmacist-led pain management programs, providing insights into patient satisfaction, perceived effectiveness of interventions, and opportunities for enhancing pharmacist roles in pain management within hospital settings.

Methodology

Study Design

This qualitative study employed a phenomenological approach to explore inpatients' experiences with pharmacist-led pain management programs within a hospital setting. Phenomenology was chosen to allow for an in-depth exploration of participants' lived experiences and subjective perspectives on the effectiveness and impact of pharmacist-managed pain management plans.

Participants

Participants were recruited from inpatient hospital setting. Inclusion criteria included adult inpatients (aged 18 years and above) who had experienced pain during their hospital stay and had received pain management interventions involving pharmacists. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure a diverse range of experiences and perspectives. A total of 15 inpatients participated in semi-structured interviews, which were conducted until data saturation was achieved.

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in a private setting within the hospital to ensure participant comfort and confidentiality. Each interview was guided by a flexible interview guide developed based on a review of relevant literature and study objectives. The interviews explored participants' experiences with pharmacist-led pain management programs, focusing on themes such as satisfaction with pain relief, perceptions of pharmacist involvement, and overall impact on hospital experience.

Data Analysis

Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis. Initial codes were generated from the transcripts, and recurring patterns and themes were identified through an iterative process of coding and categorization. Themes were refined through discussion among the research team to ensure trustworthiness and validity of findings. NVivo software was utilized to assist in organizing and managing qualitative data.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the ethics committee prior to commencing data collection. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before conducting interviews, ensuring voluntary participation and confidentiality of their responses. Participants were assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without repercussions.

Limitations

Limitations of the study included the potential for participant recall bias regarding past experiences with pain management, as well as the single-center nature of the study, which may limit generalizability to other hospital settings. Efforts were made to mitigate these limitations through rigorous data collection and analysis procedures.

Findings

Theme 1: Effectiveness of Pain Relief

Sub-theme 1.1: Perceptions of Pain Reduction

Participants consistently reported varying degrees of pain relief following pharmacist-led interventions. Some expressed satisfaction with the effectiveness of prescribed medications and treatment adjustments by pharmacists.

Participant Quote: "The pharmacist helped adjust my pain meds, and I noticed a significant improvement. It made a big difference in my comfort level."

Sub-theme 1.2: Impact on Daily Functioning

Participants highlighted how effective pain management facilitated better sleep, improved mobility, and enhanced overall daily functioning during their hospital stay.

Participant Quote: "I could move around more easily without feeling constant pain. It really improved my ability to do things on my own."

Theme 2: Pharmacist-Patient Interaction

Sub-theme 2.1: Communication and Education

Participants appreciated pharmacists who took time to explain medications, potential side effects, and the importance of adherence. Clear communication fostered trust and confidence in treatment plans.

Participant Quote: "The pharmacist explained everything in detail, which helped me understand how my meds were working and what to expect."

Sub-theme 2.2: Supportive Role

Participants valued pharmacists who listened to their concerns, provided emotional support, and actively engaged in their pain management care.

Participant Quote: "It was reassuring to have someone who cared about how I was feeling and took steps to make me more comfortable."

Theme 3: Overall Satisfaction and Experience

Sub-theme 3.1: Satisfaction with Care

Overall, participants expressed high satisfaction with pharmacist-led pain management programs, attributing their positive hospital experiences to effective pain relief strategies.

Participant Quote: "I felt well taken care of. The pharmacist's involvement really made a difference in my recovery."

Sub-theme 3.2: Recommendations for Improvement

Some participants suggested areas for improvement, such as shorter wait times for medication adjustments and more frequent follow-up visits from pharmacists.

Participant Quote: "If they could check on me more often to see how I'm doing with the pain meds, that would be helpful."

Discussion

Effectiveness of Pharmacist-Led Pain Management Programs

The findings of this study underscore the significant role of pharmacists in enhancing pain management outcomes for hospitalized patients. Participants consistently reported varying degrees of pain relief, highlighting the effectiveness of pharmacist-led interventions in adjusting medications and optimizing treatment plans. This aligns with previous research emphasizing pharmacists' expertise in medication management and their ability to improve pain control through tailored interventions (Brennan et al., 2007; Gélinas et al., 2009).

The positive impact on daily functioning observed in our study echoes the broader literature, which suggests that effective pain management not only alleviates discomfort but also promotes patient mobility and overall quality of life during hospitalization (Birnie et al., 2019). Improved pain relief is crucial not only for patient comfort but also for facilitating faster recovery and reducing the length of hospital stays (Mekonnen et al., 2016).

Pharmacist-Patient Interaction and Communication

Central to the success of pharmacist-led pain management programs is the quality of pharmacist-patient interactions. Participants valued pharmacists who provided clear explanations about medications, potential side effects, and pain management strategies. Effective communication not only enhances patient understanding but also fosters trust and collaboration in shared decision-making processes (Birnie et al., 2019; Mekonnen et al., 2016).

Our findings support previous research indicating that patient education and counseling by pharmacists contribute to improved medication adherence and patient satisfaction with care (Mekonnen et al., 2016). Pharmacists' supportive role in addressing patient concerns and providing emotional support further enhances the patient experience and contributes to overall satisfaction with pain management interventions (Gélinas et al., 2009).

Overall Satisfaction and Recommendations for Improvement

High levels of satisfaction reported by participants reflect the positive impact of pharmacist-led pain management programs on their hospital experience. Participants appreciated pharmacists' proactive approach in managing pain and expressed gratitude for the individualized care received. Such positive patient experiences are crucial for patient-centered care initiatives and contribute to hospital quality metrics (Brennan et al., 2007).

However, participants also provided constructive feedback, suggesting improvements such as more frequent pharmacist follow-ups and streamlined processes for medication adjustments. Addressing these recommendations could further enhance the continuity and effectiveness of pharmacist-led pain management programs, ultimately improving patient outcomes and satisfaction (Mekonnen et al., 2016).

Limitations and Future Directions

Despite the valuable insights gained from this study, several limitations must be acknowledged. The single-center nature of the study limits the generalizability of findings to other hospital settings. Future research could expand the scope to include multiple institutions and diverse patient populations to capture broader perspectives on pharmacist-led pain management.

Furthermore, the study's reliance on self-reported experiences may introduce bias, such as recall bias regarding pain severity and treatment effectiveness. Utilizing objective measures, such as pain scales and clinical outcomes, could provide additional validation of patient-reported experiences.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this qualitative study provides compelling evidence of the positive impact of pharmacist-led pain management programs on inpatient care experiences. By emphasizing effective pain relief, pharmacist-patient communication, and overall satisfaction, the findings underscore the pivotal role of pharmacists in optimizing pain management outcomes within hospital settings. Addressing patient feedback and enhancing pharmacist involvement can further strengthen these programs and contribute to improved patient-centered care.

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Appendix: Semi-Structured Interview Guide

1. Introduction and Background

- Can you please describe your experience with pain management during your current hospital stay?
- How would you rate the effectiveness of the pain management interventions you have received?

2. Experience with Pharmacist-Led Pain Management

- Can you recall any interactions with the pharmacist regarding your pain management?
- How satisfied were you with the pharmacist's involvement in your pain management care?

3. Perceptions of Pain Relief

- Can you describe any changes you noticed in your pain levels after receiving interventions from the pharmacist?
- How did effective pain relief impact your ability to perform daily activities during your hospital stay?

4. Pharmacist-Patient Communication

- How would you describe the communication between you and the pharmacist regarding your pain management plan?
- Did the pharmacist explain your medications, potential side effects, or other aspects of your pain management in a way that was easy to understand?

5. Impact on Overall Hospital Experience

- In your opinion, how did the pharmacist's involvement in your pain management affect your overall hospital experience?
- Were there any specific aspects of the pharmacist's care that stood out to you?

6. Recommendations and Suggestions

- Do you have any suggestions for improving pharmacist-led pain management programs in this hospital?
- What could pharmacists do differently to enhance the pain management experience for patients like yourself?

7. Final Thoughts

- Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience with pharmacist-led pain management?