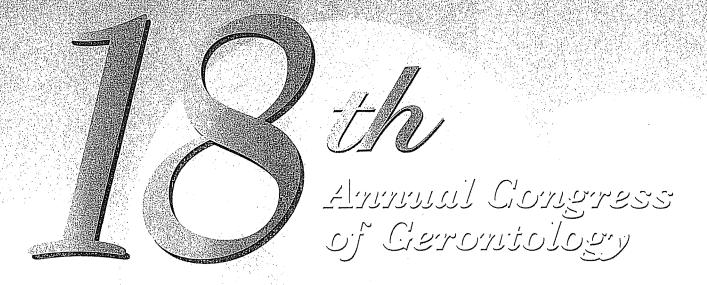


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Effects of an Evidence-based Foot and Toenail Care Protocol in Geriatrics Patients

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BACKGROUND: Foot and toenail problems are prevalent among older people, particularly those who require assistance in care. The importance of foot care, however, is often overlooked as they are usually deemed as minor problems. These "minor" problems eventually result in unnecessary distress and complications for the older people. This study aims to examine the effects of an evidence-based care protocol in promoting foot health in geriatric patients.

METHOD: The study was conducted in a subacute geriatric ward using prospective quasi-experimental study with nonequivalent comparison group design. The care protocol was developed by a multi-disciplinary panel with geriatricians, podiatrists, nurses and academics and was grounded on extensive literature review and clinical judgments. It covers various aspects of care, including a systematic foot and toenail assessment, foot hygiene, toenail care, advanced care for foot and toenail complications, and patient education.

RESULTS: A total of 72 and 78 patients from the control and intervention groups completed the assessment at baseline (Day 0) and post test (Day 6) respectively. Of them, the most common foot problems were thickened nails (41.3%), hallus valgus (28.7%) and corn/callus (24%). More than half of them did not have the appropriate footwear initially. By adjusting the potential confounding variables in the generalized estimating equations model, there are significant improvements in toenail problems as well as patient's level of satisfaction towards foot care in the intervention group (p<0.001). Improvements in health-related quality of life were also noted, though they were not statistically significant.

CONCLUSION: The findings showed that the care protocol was well received by the geriatric patients and it can also increase their awareness towards foot care. Long term effects of the care protocol have yet been demonstrated due to the limited length of stay of study subjects.