Journal of Pharmaceutical Care & Health Systems

OPEN ACCESS Freely available online

Perspective

Optimizing Medication Management in Geriatric Populations

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ABOUT THE STUDY

The geriatric population is one of the fastest-growing demographics worldwide, with a marked increase in life expectancy. As individuals age, they tend to experience multiple health issues, including chronic diseases, cognitive decline and sensory impairments, which can lead to complex medical needs. Consequently, medication management in older adults becomes increasingly crucial. Older adults often take multiple medications, referred to as polypharmacy, which can increase the risk of drug interactions, Adverse Drug Reactions (ADRs) and medication nonadherence. This review aims to explore the various strategies and approaches used to optimize medication management in the geriatric population.

Medication management for elderly individuals presents unique challenges. The aging process itself affects pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics, altering how the body absorbs, distributes, metabolizes and eliminates drugs. Aging also often leads to comorbidities, which may require complex treatment regimens. Polypharmacy, defined as the use of five or more medications, is prevalent among older adults and it is associated with an increased risk of medication errors, ADRs and hospitalizations. Given these risks, optimizing medication management becomes a priority to enhance patient outcomes and reduce healthcare costs.

One of the key strategies in optimizing medication management is the use of Comprehensive Medication Reviews (CMRs). A CMR involves a detailed evaluation of a patient's medication regimen, taking into account their medical history, age, renal and hepatic function and other individual factors. Pharmacists, in particular, play a vital role in conducting CMRs and providing recommendations to physicians regarding medication adjustments, such as discontinuing unnecessary drugs or substituting potentially harmful medications.

Another essential component in optimizing medication management is the focus on medication reconciliation. This process involves comparing a patient's medication orders with the medications they are actually taking. It aims to ensure that any discrepancies, such as missed doses, duplicate medications, or incorrect prescriptions, are identified and resolved. Medication reconciliation, particularly during transitions of care (e.g., hospital to home or between different healthcare providers), can significantly reduce the risk of medication-related problems.

Additionally, improving medication adherence is another critical aspect of medication management in older adults. Factors influencing medication adherence in this population include cognitive impairment, physical limitations, complex regimens and forgetfulness. Strategies such as medication synchronization, blister packaging and electronic reminders have been shown to improve adherence. In some cases, healthcare professionals may also involve caregivers to help ensure the proper administration of medications.

Healthcare providers must also consider individualized medication management plans for older patients. Factors such as frailty, cognition, functional status and the patient's goals of care should guide treatment decisions. Person-centered care, where patients and caregivers are actively involved in the decision-making process, ensures that medications align with the patient's preferences, values and lifestyle. Shared decision-making is particularly important in geriatric care, where treatment goals may shift from curative to palliative in certain conditions.

Optimizing medication management in geriatric populations is a multifaceted and ongoing process. With the aging population on the rise, healthcare systems must adopt strategies that address the unique challenges of managing complex medication regimens in older adults. Pharmacists, physicians and other healthcare professionals must work collaboratively to ensure that medications are used effectively and safely, minimizing risks and maximizing therapeutic outcomes.

A holistic approach to medication management in the elderly involves comprehensive medication reviews, medication reconciliation, strategies to improve medication adherence and deprescribing practices. By individualizing treatment plans and engaging patients in the decision-making process, healthcare providers can help older adults achieve better health outcomes and improve their quality of life. Ultimately, optimizing medication management not only enhances patient safety but

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Received: 03-Feb-2025, Manuscript No. JPCHS-25-37568; **Editor assigned:** 05-Feb-2025, PreQC No. JPCHS-25-37568 (PQ); **Reviewed:** 19-Feb-2025, QC No. JPCHS-25-37568; **Revised:** 26-Feb-2025, Manuscript No. JPCHS-25-37568 (R); **Published:** 04-Mar-2025. DOI: 10.35248/ 2376-0419.25.12.374

Citation: Zhang LW (2025). Optimizing Medication Management in Geriatric Populations. J Pharm Care Health Syst.12:374.

also reduces the burden on healthcare systems, contributing to more efficient and sustainable care for the aging population.

In summary, optimizing medication management in the geriatric population is vital for improving patient outcomes, reducing the risk of adverse events and enhancing overall quality of life. The collaboration between healthcare providers, caregivers and patients is crucial to achieving the best possible outcomes in medication therapy management. This ongoing effort is essential as we work toward addressing the growing healthcare needs of older adults.