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A comparison of non-pharmacological interventions for reducing pain in individuals with HIV

Devan, Dershnee

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ABSTRACT

HIV-related pain is commonly experienced by people living with HIV/AIDS; it compromises function and quality of life and there are no known effective pharmacological therapies. Previously, a peer led self-management group was no more effective in reducing pain and improving quality of life than controls who received an education book. Thus, the aim of this randomised single blinded study was to examine the effectiveness of three non-pharmacological interventions: a therapeutic relationship alone, a therapeutic relationship with education, and a therapeutic relationship with a peer led self-management group on pain and other variables. Forty-one HIV-positive participants aged 18 – 50 and currently receiving antiretroviral treatment, were recruited from the virology clinic of Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital. Participants were assessed at baseline and weeks 4,8,12 and 24. There were no significant changes in pain interference, self-efficacy, depressive symptoms or health-related quality of life either between the intervention groups or over time but there was a significant decrease in pain severity between the intervention groups. There were no changes in physical function between the groups but six components of physical function changed over time: loaded and unloaded reach, sit to stand and belt tie improved, preferred and fastest walking speed reduced. The study does not support the use of the therapeutic relationship, education or self-management for improving quality of life in HIV related pain, however, pain severity and physical function did change over time with the use of non-pharmacological interventions.