Development of an evidence-based guideline for screening and managing depression in older adults

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Purpose:

This study aimed to develop an evidence-based guideline for screening and managing depression in older adults.

Background:

Depression in older adults is often ignored and inadequately diagnosed and managed. Literature indicates that older patients with depression may also have cognitive impairment which has similar symptoms with dementia. Therefore, this makes the assessment of depression more difficult among older adults.

METHODS:

A systematic review method was used and searched published guidelines and systematic reviews from 2000-2012. Relevant guidelines and reviews were appraised by three certified reviewers using appraisal tools and further analyzed. With the results from the systematic reviews and suggestions from expert focus group, we developed the guideline for screening and managing depression suitable for older adults in Taiwan. This guideline was evaluated by 12 psychiatric experts, and further revision was made according to the experts' recommendations. The guideline was then assessed by 357 clinical professionals in psychiatric wards and long-term care facilities using a questionnaire survey method for its feasibility and possible obstacles in implementing the guideline in the clinical settings in Taiwan.

RESULTS:

The final version of guideline has 62 recommendations, including identifying high-risk factors for older adults with depression, assessing cognitive function for older adults, assessing depression level of older adults, screening results and referral requirements, and interventions.

CONCLUSIONS:

An evidence-based guideline for screening and managing depression of older adults was developed through a systematic review method. This guideline provides nursing professionals a clear guidance and tool to accurately assess depression in order to provide suitable care and interventions in managing depression problems of older adults.