

Illness experiences in middle-aged adults with early-stage knee osteoarthritis

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Purpose:

- Nurses lack understanding of the illness experiences of middle-aged patients who were confirmed to have early knee osteoarthritis and of how they manage the disease in Taiwan.
- To understand the illness experiences of middle-aged adults with early knee osteoarthritis.

Methods:

- A qualitative descriptive design was applied.
- Participants with knee osteoarthritis, aged 40-55 years, were recruited by purposive sampling (n=17).
- The data were collected through semistructured interviews from July - December 2010. All interview transcripts were analysed using qualitative inductive content analysis to identify key themes.

Results:

- Illness experiences of the seventeen participants were classified into three major themes: (i) unfamiliarity with osteoarthritis; (ii) effects on daily life; and (iii) protection and alleviation.
- The three main themes occurred repeatedly and affected the life experiences of the patients.

Conclusion:

- This study indicates that patients with osteoarthritis have insufficient knowledge related to disease process and they do not know how to cope effectively.
- They need healthcare providers to supply them with adequate osteoarthritis disease information.
- Nurses should also develop interventions in their practices and guide patients to use suitable techniques to improve the functional status of their knee joint(s).

Keywords: knee joint, osteoarthritis, qualitative research, middle-aged, adult, nursing

Table . Themes and subthemes of illness experiences in early knee OA

Unfamiliarity with OA

- Inconsistency of the disease with age
- Questioning why they have the disease
- Inability to control the disease progression
- Not knowing how to cope with OA

Effects on daily life

- Daily activity and exercise limitation
- Reduction of work, affecting household income

Protection and alleviation

- Changing lifestyles
- Avoiding medicinal side effects
- Using auxiliary devices

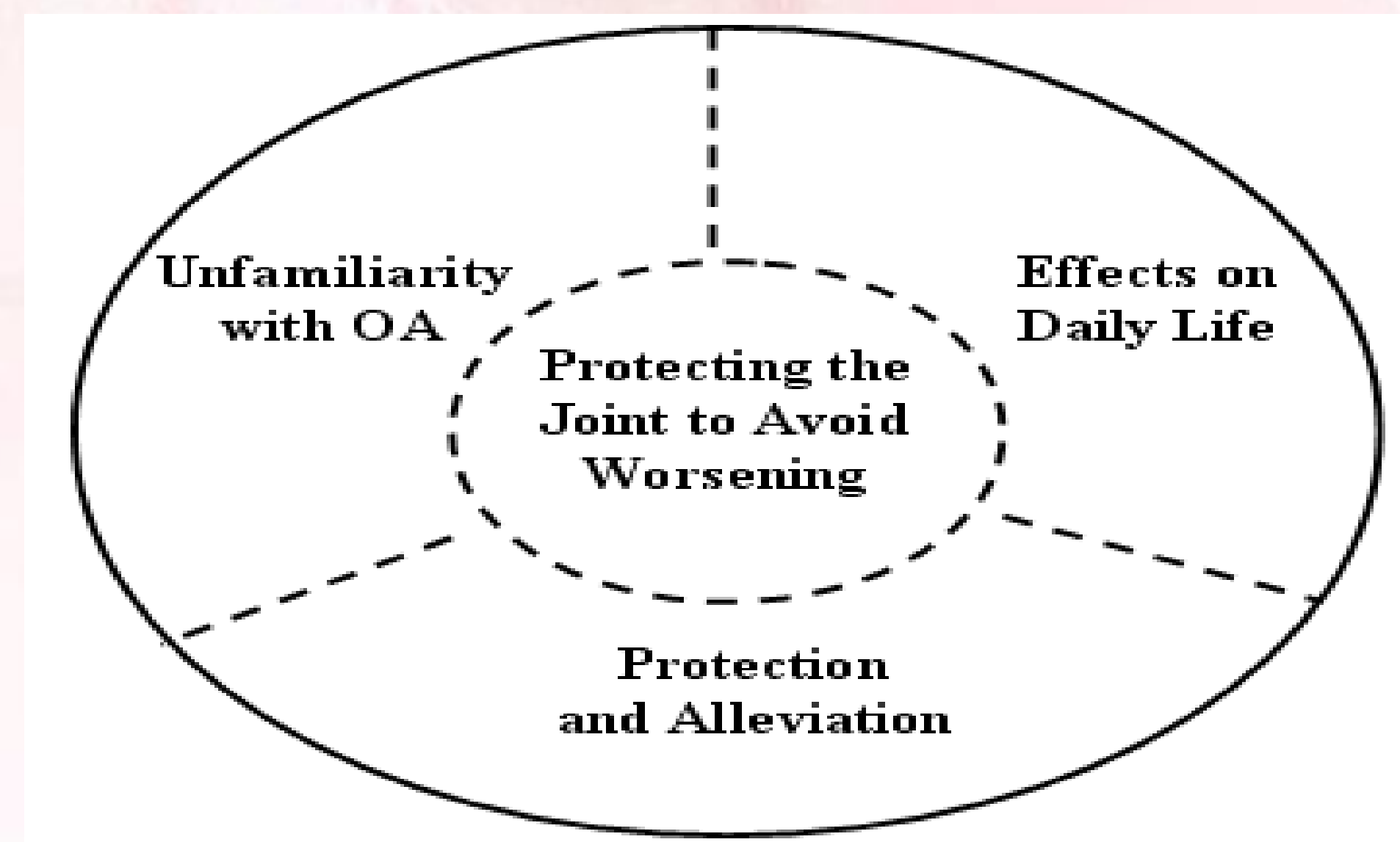


Figure The illness experience in middle-aged adults with early knee osteoarthritis