



Service Priorities and Programmes
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Skin care of the elderly in SCH

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Introduction

Due to aging, skin problems including xerosis and skin breakdown that cause discomfort to the elderly and affect their quality of life as a result care burden and cost are increased. In order to reduce these skin problems, a mixture of emollients has been used for years in the Infirmary Unit of SCH.

Objectives

To investigate the effects of emollient therapy on skin conditions among the elderly in the long-term care setting.

Methodology

1.It is a quasi-experimental study by comparing an intervention group against the control group. 2.8 week study period from Dec 2011 to Feb 2012. 3.The targets were the elderly 65yrs or above in the Infirmary Unit of SCH. 4.In intervention group, emulsifying ointment was used as body wash which was followed by an emollient mixture of emulsifying ointment, vaseline, aqueous cream and olive oil 5.In control group, commercial body wash and skin moisture products were used. 6.The Overall Dry Skin Score (ODS) and the Dry Skin Area and Severity Index (DASI) are used as an assessment tools.

Result

1.Sample characteristics: -The mean age of the subjects was 81.62 ranging from 65 to 97 years. -58 participants completed the study with 30 and 28 of them in the intervention group and the control group respectively. -Most of them were female and totally ADL dependent. 2. Skin condition at baseline: -Before the intervention, more than half of the subjects had mild to moderate skin dryness, especially on the lower extremities. Only a small number of them had severe skin dryness problems. 3. Results from the Overall Dry Skin Score (ODS): -By comparing the ODS scores between the two groups at different time points, there was significant improvement in the skin condition of the subjects in the intervention group at the end week ($p=0.034$ by Mann-Whitney U test). 4. Results from the Dry Skin Area and Severity Index (DASI): -The DASI of the intervention group had dropped dramatically indicating that

the skin conditions of the subjects in the group were greatly improved. However, statistical difference between the intervention and control groups was only noted in the left hands. 5. Conclusions: -There are findings which suggested that emollient therapy was effective in improving skin hydration of the elderly. However, the study was limited by small sample size, so caution should be taken in the interpretation of the findings.