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Geriatric non-pharmacological mental healthcare practices used at Kaithady state home for elders in Sri Lanka

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Background: At the present children fail to look after their elderly dependent parents due to the busy life style and leave them in old age homes. In 2012, 24,535 out of 2,520,573 elders in Sri Lanka were institutionalized in elders' homes. This type of negligence from familial love and affection causes mental and emotional elder abuse.

Objective: This study aimed to identify non-pharmacological mental healthcare practices used by the elders at old age homes to alleviate their mental health problems.

Methods & Materials: A cross-sectional survey was conducted with 70 elders who were not cognitively impaired using a convenience sampling method. Data were obtained from elders using validated self-administered questionnaires at Kaithady state home for elders situated in Jaffna District, Sri Lanka. Descriptive statistical data analysis was used.

Results: Of the sample, 57.14% (40) were males. Most of the elders (31.42%, n=22) belonged to 71 to 80 years age group. Among them, 64.29% (n=45) were married people, 71.11% (n=32) were widowed, and 40% (n=18) had no children. Out of 70 elders, 38.57% (n=27) were admitted to the old age home on their own will, and 40% (n=20) were admitted due to the absence of caregivers. Among 70 elders, 22.86% (n=16) experienced loneliness, 44.29% (n=31) faced psychological stress, and 50% (n=35) were sociable. Among 70 elders, 55.71% (n=39) engaged in religious coping activities only, 18.57% (n=13) engaged in religious coping and meditation, 4.29% (n=3) practiced breathing exercises and meditation, 14.29% (n=10) followed religious coping, breathing exercises and meditation and 7.14% (n=5) practiced religious coping, yoga, breathing exercise and meditation as non-pharmacological strategies to cope up with geriatric mental health issues.

Conclusion: Non-pharmacological approaches such as religious coping, meditation, breathing exercises, and yoga are practiced among the elders to alleviate mental health ailments. The need and impact of these approaches on the geriatric mental healthcare development of the country is high.