P1-44: The Changing Face of Sickle Cell Disease: Older Adults Express Successful Aging through Life Review

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Presentation Preference: Student poster submission

Abstract Categories:
Research Interest Groups (RIGs): Minority Health
Thematic Areas: Health Disparities

Abstract:
Introduction: Aging is a process that changes a young adult into an older, potentially less healthy person, with an increased risk of illness, injury, and death. This process is much different
for individuals with sickle cell disease (SCD) who live with a chronic illness throughout their lives. SCD and its clinical manifestations often result in a lifetime of pain, hospitalizations, and stigma. Although modern medicine has resulted in advances in the diagnosis and treatment of SCD, these patients often receive inadequate health care and may lack the skills needed to improve self-care management, health status, and quality of life. Despite not having the benefits of recent medical advances, many adults have aged successfully perhaps due to self care management resources and family management styles. The purpose of this study is to uncover factors during childhood/adolescence that have influenced successful aging in older adults with SCD.

Method(s): Descriptive, qualitative methods were used to conduct life review interviews. Inclusion criteria included: ability to understand English, age of at least 45 years, ability to give informed consent, and a diagnosis of SCD. The sample consists of ten females and five males from the Southeastern region of North Carolina. The Successful Aging Life Review interviews were audio taped and professionally transcribed verbatim.

Results: The respondents are on average 56 years old with slightly more than a high school education. Ten have sickle cell anemia (SS) and three have sickle hemoglobin C disease (SC) and two individuals were not sure of the type of SCD. Three respondents work full-time while the others are not employed due to disability (n=10) or retirement (n=2). Factors that emerged as themes that enhance successful aging were: supportive families, creative parenting, internal/external motivation, and learning one’s body.

Discussion & Conclusions: Preliminary results support the value of conducting life reviews with older adults with SCD. The information gained may lead to the development of psychosocial interventions that may enhance self care management and inform family management styles. These interventions may improve the transition from pediatric to adult care thus improving the potential to successfully age with SCD.

Abstract History: This abstract has not been presented or accepted for presentation in whole or in part at the SNRS or other scientific meeting.

Financial Disclosure: No, I (or a member of my immediate family) have not received something of value* from or own stock (or stock options) in a commercial company or institution related directly or indirectly to the subject of my presentation.

FDA Disclosure: I will not be describing any pharmaceutical and/or medical device.

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