Reviewer's report

Title: Activity interventions to improve the experience of care in hospital for people living with dementia: a systematic review

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Reviewer: Murna Downs

Reviewer's report:

This is a timely study. Improving care in hospital for people living with dementia is a policy imperative. Some discussion of the comorbidities associated with the age group most at risk for living with dementia would provide further rationale for the importance of this topic area.

The authors sought to conduct a systematic review, including conducting a meta analysis, of the evidence for the effectiveness of activity interventions on outcomes for people living with dementia. As there were too few studies which met their inclusion criteria they were unable to conduct a meta analysis and instead have provided a narrative synthesis of the six studies included. They have noted positive trends in effectiveness of activity interventions on outcomes including patient engagement, mood, well being and quality of life and behaviour. It would be helpful to know why they have chosen to categorise these outcomes as 'the experience of care'.

The authors have provided a robust methodological critique of the state of the science in this area, noting the poor quality of effectiveness studies, despite the policy emphasis. Their recommendations for future research are both comprehensive and pragmatic.

Discussion of the theoretical basis for the effectiveness of activity interventions would be enhanced by inclusion of the unmet needs model of behaviour see for eg J Gerontol Nurs. 1999 Sep;25(9):7-9. An overview of the need-driven dementia-compromised behavior model. Kolanowski AM1. Furthermore some discussion of the implications of the heterogeneity of activity interventions would be useful. The authors might also give consideration to the effect different co morbidities may have on the effectiveness of activity interventions.

In summary, this is a well designed and executed systematic review which advances our knowledge about effective activity interventions for people with dementia in hospital. The authors are to be commended for the rigour of their work.
Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

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