

Evidence-Based Non-Pharmacologic Interventions for Pain

CATEGORY	INTERVENTION	REFERENCES & RESOURCES
Behavioral	Behavioral operant therapies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Modeling appropriate behavior · Assigning tasks in a graded or hierarchical manner that promotes success & reinforcement · Practicing tasks · Managing attention or rewards given by significant others · Reinforce healthy behaviors & ignore maladaptive behaviors 	17, 54
Cognitive	Activities	MDS-RAI
	Coping Techniques	MDS-RAI
	Meditation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Loving kindness · Mindfulness 	NCCIH (85) , 1 , 8 , 12 , 13 , 14 , 32 , 54 , 59 , 61 , 63 , 78
	Spirituality: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Meaningful practices · Readings 	8 , 15 , 47
Cognitive (Mind-body medicine)	Prayer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Centering 	8 , 13 , 14 , 47 , 59 , 63
Energy- based	Reiki	8 , 63 , 65
	Reflexology	63
	Therapeutic Touch (TT); Healing Touch	8 , 63
Environment	Assistive Devices	MDS-RAI
	Environment modification: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Comfortable seating · Lighting · Sounds · Adjusting room temperature · Tightening & smoothing linens 	MDS-RAI , 63
	Mattress · Use pressure redistributing	MDS-RAI
Interventional	Mirror therapy (<i>for treatment of phantom limb pain</i> ; induction of limb imagery)	63
	Osteopathic manipulative treatment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Spinal manipulation 	NCCIH (86) , 8 , 15 , 58 , 72
Interventional & behavioral	Biofeedback	8 , 14 , 23 , 29 , 50 , 54 , 59 , 63
Interventional & physical	Physical therapy	14 , 23 , 38 , 50 , 58 , 72
Interventional device	Electrical stimulation	58
	Magnets; electromagnetic therapy	17 , 63

CATEGORY	INTERVENTION	REFERENCES & RESOURCES
	Ultrasound (galvanic)	23 , 38 , 58
Interventional, psychological	Neuro Emotional Technique (NET) (<i>testing & manually holding the associated meridian pulse points facilitating cognitive & emotional processing & resolution</i>)	54
Movement	Tai Chi	NCCIH (87) , 8 , 14 , 32 , 63
	Yoga	NCCIH (88) , 8 , 32 , 63 , 78
Physical	Baths	MDS-RAI
	Cold/Ice (cryotherapy) Compresses Packs	MDS-RAI , 1 , 9 , 13 , 14 , 17 , 23 , 29 , 38 , 47 , 50 , 54 , 58 , 63 , 74
	Exercise Aerobic Low-impact Physical activity Water (hydrotherapy)	MDS-RAI , 1 , 8 , 14 , 16 , 17 , 23 , 32 , 50 , 58 , 61 , 63 , 76
	Heat (mild)	MDS-RAI , 1 , 9 , 13 , 14 , 17 , 23 , 29 , 38 , 47 , 50 , 54 , 58 , 63 , 74
	Immobilization (<i>with caution</i>)	50 , 58
	Massage	MDS-RAI , NCCIH (89) , 1 , 13 , 14 , 17 , 29 , 32 , 38 , 47 , 50 , 54 , 57 , 58 , 59 , 63 , 74
	· Positioning/repositioning · Neutral body alignment	MDS-RAI , 47 , 63 , 74
	Sleep hygiene	63
	Physical & psychological	Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR)
Physical, movement, psychological, spiritual	QiGong (<i>ancient practice of manipulating energy through slow body movements & meditation with imagery & breathing techniques</i>)	NCCIH (90) , 8 , 54 , 61
Physical; Interventional	Acupuncture Acupressure	MDS-RAI , 1 , 8 , 50 , 54 , 61 , 63 , 72
	Chiropractic	MDS-RAI , 1 , 8 , 50 , 58 , 59 , 67
	Rehabilitation therapy: · Optimizing ROM · Strength · Endurance · Neuromuscular control	MDS-RAI , 23 , 54
	Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS)	MDS-RAI , 1 , 8 , 14 , 17 , 23 , 29 , 32 , 38 , 50 , 54 , 58 , 61 ,

CATEGORY	INTERVENTION	REFERENCES & RESOURCES
		63 , 72
Psychological	Breathing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Controlled · Relaxation 	47 , 63 , 74
	Distraction/diversion	MDS-RAI , 23 , 47 , 50 , 63 , 74
	Humor & laughter	47
	Hypnosis · Hypnotherapy	NCCIH (91) , 8 , 14 , 23 , 29 , 32 , 50 , 54 , 63
	Imagery: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Guided · Visual 	8 , 13 , 14 , 20 , 23 , 54 , 61 , 63 , 74
	Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR)	8
	Music or Music Therapy (MT)	MDS-RAI , 8 , 13 , 14 , 32 , 47 , 50 , 52 , 54 , 61 , 63 , 66 , 74
	Pet visitation or Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT)	47 , 63
	Relaxation (techniques) · Progressive	MDS-RAI , NCCIH (92) , 9 , 12 , 23 , 29 , 32 , 50 , 63 , 74
	Reminiscence	MDS-RAI , 47
	Visits or telephone calls from loved ones	39
Psychological (Mind-body medicine)	Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT)	MDS-RAI , 1 , 8 , 14 , 15 , 16 , 23 , 50 , 54 , 61 , 63
	Aromatherapy	13 , 47 , 63
	Ayurveda	59
	Education (resident, caregiver)	MDS-RAI , 1 , 8 , 13 , 15 , 29 , 32 , 34 , 54 , 58 , 61 , 63 , 67 , 72
	Herbal preparations	NCCIH (93) , 32 , 59 , 63
	Life-style modifications	50
	Liniments; topical agents; home remedies	1 , 14
	Nutritional supplements	63
	Occupational therapy	38 , 72
	Stress management	61
	Supplements (dietary): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Glucosamine · Chondroitin sulfate 	NCCIH (94)
	Vibration	17

Additional Considerations

Diagnose & appropriately treat the following conditions:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Insomnia
- Other underlying illnesses
- Determine losses & potential grief/bereavement

Address pain with the following outcomes in mind:

- Improvement in quality of life (QOL)
- Maintaining function (physical, emotional, spiritual)
- Maintaining cognition
- Alleviating or reducing pain through combination of medication & alternative interventions

Critically consider potential disadvantages and suitability of an intervention:

- How will you measure the effect of the intervention?
- Is there substantial research/evidence that the intervention is effective?
- Do you have access to the necessary services?
- Will a given resident be able to effectively respond to the intervention?
- How willing is the individual (and/or family) to “try”?
- Does the intervention require alterations/adaptation given the health status of the individual?

Prepared by

Linda J. Keilman, DNP, GNP-BC
Assistant Professor, HP
Gerontological Nurse Practitioner
Michigan State University, College of Nursing
1355 Bogue Street, A126 Life Sciences Building
East Lansing, MI 48824
517.355.3365
keilman@msu.edu

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References & Resources

[MDS 3.0 RAI Manual – Section J, Pain Management](#)

[NCCIH National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health](#)

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