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**Faculty of Health Sciences
Joanna Briggs Institute**

**The best evidence for assisted bathing of older adults
with dementia:
A comprehensive systematic review**

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Abstract

The objective of this thesis was to examine the best available evidence concerning how to minimise agitated behaviours in older adults with dementia who are being assisted with their bathing. Specifically, the goal was to develop a clinical guideline based on the identified evidence for formal and informal caregivers and nurses who supervise non-qualified caregivers. The comprehensive systematic review method was used to determine the best available evidence on this topic. To identify multi-dimensional evidence that can be used to develop useful and context-specific practices, textual opinion papers were considered as alternative sources of “knowing how” type of knowledge to augment the qualitative and quantitative evidence.

A search of various databases and hand-searching identified 299 papers. Twenty-eight papers were assessed for methodological quality and from this 15 papers were included for the review: five experimental and quasi-experimental studies, two qualitative studies and eight textual opinion papers. In the quantitative component, statistical pooling was not possible due to the clinical and methodological heterogeneities of the studies, and consequently findings were analysed in a narrative format. The identified quantitative evidence supports the person-centred showering approach and towel bath/thermal bath both for reducing agitated behaviours of people with dementia and improving caregivers’ psychological status. Playing the preferred music of older adults who have dementia is also recommended for reducing the frequency of aggressive behaviours during bathing.

Regarding the qualitative component, 13 findings from the two included studies were aggregated into five categories and two meta-syntheses: 1) There should be a strategy to facilitate residents’ sense of control and caregivers should have relevant assessment and communication skills; and 2) There should be a strategy to promote safe assisted bathing while the patient’s dignity is respected. In the textual component, the eight included papers were aggregated into 63 findings and 14 categories, and from these four meta-syntheses were developed: 1) Assisted bathing should be considered an opportunity for positive and respectful

human interaction with a resident in order to minimise aggressive behaviour; 2) A creative and flexible care plan that is implemented with organisational support should be in place to provide effective assistance in minimising aggressive behaviours during bathing; 3) Practice should change from a rigid custodial task-oriented approach with a management perspective to a therapeutic person-centred approach with a prevention focus; 4) There should be a strategy to provide a safe, comfortable and private bathing environment with effective and appropriate management of orthopaedic pain.

Finally, a Best Practice Information Sheet was developed based on the evidence from the three components of the review to inform and support caregivers who provide direct assistance to people with dementia. The project successfully demonstrated that textual evidence can contribute to the identification of 'knowing how' type of evidence where there is a lack of qualitative evidence. The evidence-based healthcare movement has been criticised for failing to meet the needs of clinicians in the reality of everyday practice. In order to fill the evidence and practice gap, healthcare practice should be informed by multiple types of evidence, namely quantitative evidence, qualitative evidence and textual evidence.

Declaration:

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution to Rie Konno and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

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