

EDITORIAL

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Nursing approaches to self-care, self-management, and adaptation to illness

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Abstract

Nursing approaches to self-care, self-management, and adaptation to illness encompass diverse strategies aimed at enhancing patient well-being and empowering chronic condition management. The *BMC Nursing* collection “Nursing Approaches to Self-Care, Self-Management, and Adaptation to Illness” invites research advancing knowledge and care quality in these areas.

Self-care

For many years, self-care has been a foundational cornerstone of nursing as a discipline and profession. Several key nursing theories, such as Orem’s Self-Care Deficit Theory [1] and Riegel’s Middle-Range Theory of Self-Care in Chronic Illness [2], have highlighted the importance of self-care in nursing practice. However, the concept of self-care has evolved significantly over time, expanding beyond its original scope.

Following a comprehensive scoping review of self-care definitions, the World Health Organization defines self-care as “the ability of individuals, families, and communities to promote health, prevent disease, maintain health, and cope with illness and disability, with or without the support of a health worker” [3]. This definition highlights the multifaceted nature of self-care, which encompasses health promotion, disease prevention and control, self-medication, caregiving for dependents, and timely engagement with healthcare services, such as rehabilitation and palliative care, when necessary [3]. Notably,

self-care now extends beyond physical health, encompassing mental health and emotional well-being.

In recent years, a growing body of evidence has supported the effectiveness of nurse-led self-care interventions, particularly for patients with chronic conditions such as heart failure. Systematic reviews and meta-analyses have shown that these interventions positively impact self-care behaviours, self-efficacy, and depression while also improving quality of life, anxiety, and symptom burden among heart failure patients [4, 5]. These findings underscore the critical role nurses play in facilitating self-care practices for patients with chronic conditions, ultimately contributing to improved health outcomes.

Self-management

The concept of self-management, first introduced in the 1980s, refers to how individuals control and manage their lives while living with long-term illnesses [6]. Rooted in the seminal work of Corbin and Strauss [7], self-management involves a tripartite approach, whereby individuals manage: (1) the disease itself (e.g., medication adherence and mitigation of health risks); (2) social roles (e.g., continuing employment or social participation despite illness); and (3) emotional responses (e.g., coping with the stress and emotional burden of illness).

Over the past four decades, self-management research has expanded significantly, extending its application

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to a wide range of diseases and health conditions. This growth has led to the development of two distinct perspectives on self-management. The first aligns with Corbin and Strauss's original view, emphasising a holistic approach and life-centred management of illness [8]. The second adopts a more disease-specific approach, focusing primarily on medical management and symptom control [9].

Current research on self-management increasingly focuses on interventions designed to support patients in managing their conditions. Nurses are key players in providing self-management support, even though many interventions are multidisciplinary. Extensive systematic reviews suggest that self-management support interventions can improve self-efficacy, symptom management, and quality of life. However, evidence related to healthcare utilisation and disease-specific outcomes is more conflicted, with positive results varying by type of disease and the nature of the intervention [10]. A particularly promising area of research is the integration of digital health tools and artificial intelligence models, which can offer tailored, individualised support for patients managing chronic conditions [11, 12].

Adaptation to illness

Adaptation to illness refers to the dynamic process by which individuals adjust their physical, emotional, and psychological states to cope with a medical condition [13]. According to Roy's Adaptation Model, individuals respond to internal and external stimuli to maintain health and well-being [14]. This process involves physical adjustment and emotional and social adaptations that allow individuals to maintain a meaningful quality of life despite their illness.

Several theoretical frameworks guide nursing interventions aimed at fostering adaptation to illness, with Roy's Adaptation Model being particularly influential. In this model, adaptation occurs in four distinct modes: physiological, self-concept, role function, and interdependence. Coping is an integral aspect of adaptation, which is also highlighted in the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping by Lazarus and Folkman, which evaluates stressors (such as illness) alongside the individual's capacity to manage them [15].

Nursing strategies to promote adaptation include health education, emotional support, self-care facilitation, cognitive-behavioural interventions, and the provision of social support. These interventions are critical in helping individuals adapt to the physical and emotional demands of illness, fostering a holistic approach to patient care.

Purpose and aim of the collection

The *BMC Nursing* Collection "Nursing Approaches to Self-Care, Self-Management, and Adaptation to Illness" aims to compile innovative research focused on nursing strategies that enhance self-care, self-management, and adaptation to illness. The Collection welcomes a wide variety of article types, including research articles, database studies, software articles, study protocols, reviews, matters arising, and commentary pieces. However, particular emphasis will be placed on experimental research articles, such as those reporting findings from complex trial methodologies and those documenting the implementation of nursing initiatives or interventions to support patients' self-care, self-management and/or adaptation to illness in clinical practice. Additionally, articles exploring the underlying mechanisms of self-care and self-management interventions, and high-quality systematic reviews will be prioritized.

Researchers are encouraged to submit work exploring interventions to enhance patient well-being and improve illness management. This Collection represents a valuable opportunity to advance knowledge within the nursing discipline, ultimately contributing to improved patient care and outcomes.

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Author contributions

ÅA, FS and CS conceived and drafted the Editorial. ÅA, FS and CS revised the Editorial. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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Data availability

No datasets were generated or analysed during the current study.

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate

Not applicable.

Consent for publication

Not applicable.

Competing interests

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