Even simple innovations can improve practice

Following on from part 1 of his article on oral hygiene and mouth care for older people in acute hospitals, which we published in last month’s issue, Ben Steel sets out clinical recommendations for toothbrushing, mouthwash, mucosal and denture care, dry mouth and involvement of dental teams (page 20).

He explains the simple, effective and evidence-based measures that nurses can adopt safely as part of an individualised oral care plan, but also identifies the concerns and prejudices relating to, for example, the use of foam sticks for mucosal care and petroleum-based lubricants for dry lips.

One top tip: the best toothbrushes have small heads, soft bristles and long handles.

Our cover story focuses on the higher-tech end of practice: neither nurses nor older people need to be computer experts to use digital health technology (DHT), such as telecare or global positioning system monitoring, but they do need to perceive the benefits to make its uptake and engagement easier.

This is the view of Katherine Curtis and Kyle Price from Bournemouth University, who on page 27 identify that lack of previous technical knowledge is not a barrier to DHT uptake, if users don’t feel stigmatised by the technology, for example by wearing falls sensors, and if user interfaces are kept simple.

While it is essential we resolve barriers to best practice involving relatively low-tech interventions such as oral care, health professionals also need to embrace the opportunities for emerging interventions, such as DHT.

Nursing Older People will take its usual print break in January but will be back in February 2017. Keep visiting the website, at nursingolderpeople.com, for updates from the specialty.

In the meantime, I would like to wish you all a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

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