

Nurse-Administered Hand Massage

Integration into an infusion suite's standard of care

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BACKGROUND: Nurse-delivered hand massage is a safe and effective intervention that has potential for positively affecting nursing and patient outcomes.

OBJECTIVES: Nurses in a National Cancer Institute–designated academic health center outpatient chemotherapy infusion suite were taught how to administer a hand massage to strengthen the nurse–patient relationship and improve patient experience, comfort, satisfaction, stress, and anxiety.

METHODS: A pre-/postimplementation group comparison design was used. Patients in both groups completed self-reported measures of stress, comfort, satisfaction, and anxiety. Nurses completed Likert-type scales pre- and postimplementation on the perceived benefits of hand massage to the patient and nursing practice, impact on patient anxiety, and preparation in providing a hand massage.

FINDINGS: A positive trend was seen in all indicators. Patients who received a hand massage had a statistically significant improvement in comfort ($p = 0.025$) compared to those who did not. A statistically significant improvement was seen in all nurse indicators pre- to postimplementation.

KEYWORDS

oncology nursing; massage; nurse–patient relationship; symptom management

DIGITAL OBJECT IDENTIFIER

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CANCER TREATMENT IS AN ARDUOUS AND LENGTHY PROCESS. Although pharmaceutical and technological advances have improved treatment outcomes, patients continue to experience many undesirable sequelae. Besides the side effects of chemotherapy, patients experience psychosocial effects, including feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, anxiety, depression, and isolation (Karagozlu & Kahve, 2013). In addition, the incidence of anxiety is reported to be as high as 50% among new patients with cancer (Sheldon, Swanson, Dolce, Marsh, & Summers, 2008).

To help alleviate the negative consequences of cancer and side effects of treatment, about 48%–80% of patients with cancer report using integrative therapies, the most common being massage therapy, as stated in Greenlee et al. (2014). In a study conducted at a major cancer center when massage therapy was integrated into inpatient and outpatient care, patients reported a 50% decrease in pain, fatigue, stress, anxiety, nausea, and depression (Cassileth & Vickers, 2004). Oncology nurses play a crucial role in supporting patients with cancer throughout their journey.

The fast-paced, disease-focused nature of cancer care can create a physical and emotional disconnect between patients and nurses. However, when nurses use touch in a therapeutic capacity, it reconnects the nurse and patient, leading to a strengthened relationship, a crucial component of nursing care (Connor & Howett, 2009; Kolcaba, Dowd, Steiner, & Mitzel, 2004). In addition, intentional touch in the form of a nurse-delivered massage is an evidence-based, nonverbal way for a nurse to communicate compassion, concern, and empathy while reducing patient anxiety and improving patient comfort (Connor & Howett, 2009; Karagozlu & Kahve, 2013).

Hand massage has been shown to strengthen the nurse–patient relationship; improve patient comfort, relaxation, and satisfaction; and reduce stress and anxiety. Therefore, the purpose of this evidence-based practice project was to incorporate positive and therapeutic touch in the form of a nurse-delivered hand massage at an academic National Cancer Institute (NCI)–designated chemotherapy infusion suite.

Touch in Nursing Care

The types of touch used for nursing care can be categorized as procedural or intentional (Connor & Howett, 2009). *Procedural touch* is defined as the