



Outcomes of therapeutic massage for hospitalized cancer patients.

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PURPOSE: To examine the effects of therapeutic massage on perception of pain, subjective sleep quality, symptom distress, and anxiety in patients hospitalized for treatment of cancer. **ORGANIZING CONSTRUCT:** Rogers' Science of Unitary Human Beings and Watson's theory of human caring. **METHODS:** Quasiexperimental. The sample consisted of 41 patients admitted to the oncology unit at a large urban medical center in the United States for chemotherapy or radiation therapy. Twenty participants received therapeutic massage and 21 received the control therapy, nurse interaction. The outcome variables were measured on admission and at the end of 1 week via the following instruments: a Numerical Rating Scale for pain intensity and Likert-type scale for distress from pain; The Verran Snyder-Halpern Sleep Scale, McCorkle and Young's Symptom Distress Scale, and the Spielberger State Anxiety Inventory. ANOVA and t tests were used to analyze between and within group differences in mean scores and main effects on outcome variables. **FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS:** Mean scores for pain, sleep quality, symptom distress, and anxiety improved from baseline for the subjects who received therapeutic massage; only anxiety improved from baseline for participants in the comparison group. Statistically significant interactions were found for pain, symptom distress, and sleep. Sleep improved only slightly for the participants receiving massage, but it deteriorated significantly for those in the control group. The findings support the potential for massage as a nursing therapeutic for cancer patients receiving chemotherapy or radiation therapy.

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