



Therapeutic effects of massage therapy and handling touch on caregivers of patients undergoing autologous hematopoietic stem cell transplant.

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PURPOSE/OBJECTIVES: To examine the effect of massage therapy and Healing Touch on anxiety, depression, subjective caregiver burden, and fatigue experienced by caregivers of patients undergoing autologous hematopoietic stem cell transplant. **DESIGN:** Quasi-experimental repeated measures. **SETTING:** Oncology/hematology outpatient clinic in a large midwestern city. **SAMPLE:** 36 caregivers: 13 in the control group, 13 in the massage therapy group, and 10 in the Healing Touch group. Average age was 51.5 years; most participants were Caucasian. **METHODS:** All caregivers completed the Beck Anxiety Inventory, the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale, the Subjective Burden Scale, and the Multidimensional Fatigue Inventory-20 before and after treatment consisting of two 30-minute massages or Healing Touch treatments per week for three weeks. Caregivers in the control group received usual nursing care and a 10-minute supportive visit from one of the researchers. **MAIN RESEARCH VARIABLES:** Anxiety, depression, subjective burden, fatigue, Healing Touch, massage therapy. **FINDINGS:** Results showed significant declines in anxiety scores, depression, general fatigue, reduced motivation fatigue, and emotional fatigue for individuals in the massage therapy group only. In the Healing Touch group, anxiety and depression scores decreased, and fatigue and subjective burden increased, but these changes did not achieve statistical significance. **CONCLUSIONS:** Caregivers can benefit from massage therapy in the clinic setting. **IMPLICATIONS FOR NURSING:** Oncology nurses care for both patients and their caregivers. Although some transplant programs provide services to support lay caregivers, studies indicate that these individuals continue to feel stressed by their situation. Massage might be one intervention that can be used by nurses to decrease feelings of stress in patients' caregivers.

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