

The Effects of Reiki Therapy on Pain and Anxiety in Patients Attending a Day Oncology and Infusion Services Unit

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Abstract

Reiki is a system of natural healing techniques administered by laying of hands and transferring energy from the Reiki practitioner to the recipient. We investigated the role of Reiki in the management of anxiety, pain and global wellness in cancer patients. Building on the results of a pilot project conducted between 2003 and 2005 by a volunteer association at our hospital, a wider, 3-year study was conducted at the same center. The volunteer Reiki practitioners received 2 years of theory and practical training. The study population was 118 patients (67 women and 51 men; mean age, 55 years) with cancer at any stage and receiving any kind of chemotherapy. Before each session, the nurses collected the patient's personal data and clinical history. Pain and anxiety were evaluated according to a numeric rating scale by the Reiki practitioners. Each session lasted about 30 min; pain and anxiety scores were recorded using a Visual Analog Scale (VAS), together with a description of the physical feelings the patients perceived during the session. All 118 patients received at least 1 Reiki treatment (total number, 238). In the subgroup of 22 patients who underwent the full cycle of 4 treatments, the mean VAS anxiety score decreased from 6.77 to 2.28 ($P < .000001$) and the mean VAS pain score from 4.4 to 2.32 ($P = .091$). Overall, the sessions were felt helpful in improving well-being, relaxation, pain relief, sleep quality and reducing anxiety. Offering Reiki therapy in hospitals could respond to patients' physical and emotional needs.