

Lavender Aromatherapy

Examining the effects of lavender oil patches on patients in the hematology-oncology setting

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BACKGROUND: Lavender aromatherapy treatment has been used for the general inpatient population to promote relaxation during hospitalization; however, limited research has been conducted on its efficacy with an inpatient hematology-oncology population.

OBJECTIVES: The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to determine the feasibility of wearable overnight lavender aromatherapy skin patches as a patient-directed nursing intervention for 40 patients on an inpatient hematology-oncology unit.

METHODS: Data were collected during a two-month period using the Lavender Satisfaction Assessment and the Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7) scale. Patient demographics and open-ended responses were also collected.

FINDINGS: After implementing the overnight aromatherapy patches, about half of the participants reported an absence of anxiety or measurable anxiety symptoms, and participants perceived better sleep quality and duration. The results indicate that a nurse- and patient-driven aromatherapy intervention can improve the quality of care on an inpatient hematology-oncology unit.

KEYWORDS

aromatherapy; lavender; essential oils; hematology-oncology; anxiety

DIGITAL OBJECT IDENTIFIER

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AROMATHERAPY AND ESSENTIAL OILS ARE INCREASINGLY POPULAR, particularly among patients with cancer. According to Boehm, Büssing, and Ostermann (2012), using aromatherapy and essential oils safely may promote sleep and overall wellness among patients in a hematology-oncology setting by decreasing the severity of symptoms associated with anxiety and depression. In addition, previous studies have indicated that using lavender essential oil in the general inpatient population can provide a sense of calm during hospitalization (Boehm et al., 2012; Lytle, Mwatha, & Davis, 2014).

Background

Inpatient nursing staff on the hematology-oncology unit at Christiana Hospital in Newark, Delaware, noticed that more patients were bringing various aromatherapy items (e.g., portable diffusers, roller balls, sprays) for use during their inpatient stay. Therefore, to promote healing and a home-like environment, the inpatient nursing staff conducted a literature review to determine existing best practice for aromatherapy use in this patient population. The literature review identified a limited number of articles that focused on the use of aromatherapy in the inpatient hematology-oncology setting, with most studies examining usage only in the outpatient hematology-oncology population (Boehm et al., 2012; Ozkaraman, Dügüm, Özen Yılmaz, & Usta Yesilbalkan, 2018). A research group comprised of clinical nurses was formed on the inpatient hematology-oncology unit to explore the use of lavender aromatherapy as an adjuvant therapy for this patient population. Lavender oil was selected because of its popularity among the patients at this institution and its frequent use in complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) (National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health [NCCIH], 2016).

Lavender Aromatherapy

Lavender aromatherapy is a well-recognized form of CAM treatment throughout the world (Blumenthal, Goldberg, & Brinckmann, 2000; Hanrahan & Odle, 2009; Koulivand, Khaleghi Ghadiri, & Gorji, 2013). Historically, lavender oil has been used for traditional aromatherapy in various cultures, including Tibetan, German, and Greek medicine (Blumenthal et al., 2000). Lavender has been promoted for its sedative and relaxing