Clinical Aromatherapy: Alleviating Constipation in Patients with Cancer
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Problem: People living with cancer are at risk of developing constipation. Contributing factors could be related to progression of the disease, side effects from medication (e.g. chemotherapy, opiates use for pain).

Evidence: Scientific research has shown that essential oils (EO) are potent with remarkable medical properties related to the EO chemistry. Studies have shown both Back Pepper and Sweet Marjoram have chemical proprieties that can stimulate the gastrointestinal tract. Study of the effects of black pepper on increasing the intestinal peristalsis when taken orally found black pepper a potent stimulator. Research also shows Sweet Marjoram strengthens the peristalsis. One of the simplest and most gentle ways found to ease constipation is through abdominal massage using EO. Gentle massage can improve circulation thereby facilitating the absorption

Strategy: This purpose of this study was to evaluate the effects of clinical aromatherapy (CA) using the Essential Oils (EO) Piper Nigrum (Black Pepper) and Origanum marjoram (Sweet Marjoram) on a group of hospitalized patients living with cancer who had voiced complaints of constipation. Of the group (n=7), all were receiving Opiods and had no bowel movement in a minimum of three days prior to the use of CA. Additionally, six were receiving laxatives, one subject was laxative free.

Practice Change: Clinical Aromatherapy policy implemented in facility. Certified Clinical Aromatherapy Practitioner's (CCAP) available for patient consults initiated by bedside staff member.

Evaluation: Concurrent with standard nursing/medical care, the aromatherapy massage was administered daily up to maximum seven days until the patient had a bowel movement (BM). Results were validated using the standard patient chart history and showed on average, a BM occurred with in 48 hours with an outlier at 96 hrs for the non laxative patient.

Results: Each patient was asked to rate the effectiveness of the CA in alleviating their constipation symptoms. On an analog scale of 0 -10(0-less effective, 10 very helpful), the average of this rating was 7 with one outlier at 5 and one at 9. (2 subject’s unable to report on the analog scale).

Recommendations: Due to small study group the investigator plans to continue this study and enroll more participants within the year.

Lessons Learned: Thu the study is small holistic benefits were observed. Patients stated improvement in relaxation, overall well being and genuinely welcomed the human touch aspects of the therapy. Continue to disseminate information to staff and family members the holistic benefits of aromatherapy.
Bibliography:


