

Therapeutic Massage During Chemotherapy/Biotherapy Infusions: Oncology Patients' Perceptions of Pain, Fatigue, Nausea, Anxiety and Satisfaction

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Abstract

Background: Oncology patients commonly experience disease or treatment side effects, including pain, fatigue, nausea and/or anxiety. An expanding body of literature supports the use of therapeutic massage (TM) as an adjunct to conventional therapies to manage these symptoms.

Objective: To describe oncology patients' perceptions of pain, fatigue, nausea, anxiety and overall satisfaction with TM provided concurrently during chemotherapy and/or biotherapy.

Methods: In an academic, comprehensive, outpatient cancer center, consenting patients were asked to identify massage site preference for hands and/or feet. The Licensed Massage Therapist (LMT) delivered TM to patients concurrently receiving chemotherapy or biotherapy. Patients rated their symptoms of pain, fatigue, anxiety and nausea pre-and post-TM using a 1-5 Likert scale. Qualitative and quantitative data related to patients' perceived value of TM was obtained post-intervention.

Findings: Participants (n=58) reported a statistically significant reduction in each variable: Pain = $p<0.002$; fatigue = $p<0.000$; anxiety = $p<0.000$; nausea = $p<0.018$. Results demonstrated a high level of satisfaction with perceived value of 4.7/5.0 following first TM (n=57), and 5.0/5.0 after second TM (n=24). Findings from this study suggest TM could be a promising tool in the comprehensive management of oncology patients, and may help minimize symptoms related to cancer and/or treatment effects.

Keywords: massage, oncology, chemotherapy, biotherapy, complementary therapy