



Reiki Therapy for Young Hospitalized Children Ages 1-5 Years Receiving Palliative Care (S561)

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Outcomes

1. Describe the use of complementary therapies with young hospitalized children
2. Interpret the study results by using effect sizes calculated over time

Original Research Background

Very few interventional studies examine children under 5 years old, although about half of children served by palliative care are in that age group. Reiki, a relaxing complementary intervention, has limited evidence with children but more robust evidence with adults for symptom management.

Research Objectives

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effects of Reiki for hospitalized young children aged 1-5 years receiving palliative care on pain, stress, heart and respiratory rates, oxygenation, and quality of life (QoL).

Methods

This was a 1-group pilot study. Children received 2 Reiki sessions per week for 3 weeks and were included if they were 1-5 years old, receiving palliative care, and hospitalized for 3 weeks. Data were collected at baseline, 3 weeks, and 6 weeks. We calculated descriptive statistics and general linear modeling for repeated measures to examine effects over time.

Results

Sixteen families participated; children were 26 months old and parents 29 years old on average. We did not find statistically significant differences but did find medium-to-large clinical effect sizes over time for children's QoL ($\eta^2 = 0.23$), stress ($\eta^2 = 0.23$), oxygenation ($\eta^2 = 0.08$), heart rate ($\eta^2 = 0.09$), and respiratory rate ($\eta^2 = 0.11$). Parents' QoL decreased over most domains. Children exhibited signs of relaxation such as quiet sleep post-Reiki versus active awake pre-Reiki sessions.

Conclusion

Reiki is a noninvasive relaxing therapy that is a useful complementary therapy for hospitalized young children receiving palliative care. The children reacted positively in both action and outcome measures. Multisite studies with larger sample sizes are needed in order to be able to generate enough scientific evidence to fully recommend Reiki as an adjunct for pain management.

Implications for Research, Policy, or Practice

Reiki is an easy-to-learn intervention that is well received by children. Reiki is within the scope of practice of nurses, physicians, and other clinicians who routinely touch patients and may be implemented in the hospital, outpatient, or home setting.

References (0)

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Journal of Pain and Symptom Management, Volume 63, Issue 4, 2022, pp. 599-609

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