Guided Imagery Utilization on Post-Operative Pain: A Literature Review

NURSEING HONORS PROGRAM SYNTHESIS PROJECT

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INTRODUCTION

- Post-operative pain is not adequately managed due to various barriers.
- In 2004, 77-98% of patients reported experiencing post-operative pain. Of these patients, 40-80% reported moderate to severe pain, and 40-50% reported unsatisfactory pain management.5
- In 2008, it was reported that in one half of all surgeries, pain is inadequately managed.10
- Major consequences of unresolved post-operative pain include delayed healing, reduced mobility, reduced cognitive function, disrupted pulmonary function, and an increased risk for chronic pain.11
- Alternative approaches should be considered as adjunct to conventional allopathic approaches.

BACKGROUND

WHAT IS GUIDED IMAGERY?

- Guided imagery utilizes a person’s mind and imagination in attempt to produce a feeling of calmness and create positive emotional and physical effects.1,3,5,7 Through stories or narratives, the person creates and visualizes healing images by use of the senses including sight, sound, smell, and touch.1,3

HOW DOES GUIDED IMAGERY WORK?

- The exact mechanism of guided imagery is not completely understood.3
- **Relaxation:** Allows the person to enter relaxed state and direct attention away from the undesirable sensation.3
- Allows the person to connect with the subliminal part of the mind and encourage a change in the sensation or situation.3
- **Stress Response:** Positive imagery influences the psychoneuroimmunologic and hormonal pathways, thus changing the response to stress.3
- **Gate Control Theory:** Only one impulse can occupy the spinal cord at one time, thus suggesting that if there are positive thoughts occupying the spinal cord there will be no room for undesired sensations to be sent to the brain.3

WHY USE GUIDED IMAGERY?

- Cost efficient4,6,9
- Low risk of adverse effects4,9
- Easy to use6
- Flexible and customizable2,3
- Helps patients regain control over their pain management and become active participants in their own care6,9

RESULTS

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<td>Feldman &amp; Kassler (2001)</td>
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Findings show there are many beneficial effects attributed to the use of guided imagery. The following effects have a direct relationship to a patient’s perception of post-operative pain:
- Decreased self-reported pain rating5,6,7,8,9
- Decreased anxiety5,6,7,9
- Increased relaxation4,7,8
- Promoted sleep5,7
- Decreased length of hospital stay1,2,3
- Decreased blood pressure5,7
- Promoted healing8,9
- Increased ability to cope post-operatively8,9
- Decreased use of pain medication5

METHODS

- Keywords: guided imagery, alternative therapy, post-operative, peri-operative, surgery, pain
- Evidence from 2005-2015 and written in English was included. Evidence involving all populations was included. Articles were excluded if they were not scholarly and peer-reviewed.
- Evidence strength was determined by use of the Hopkins Nursing Evidence-Based Practice Rating Scale.10

IMPLICATIONS

- Guided imagery is effective in reducing pain and related symptoms.
- Guided imagery can be utilized pre-operatively and post-operatively.
- Guided imagery is recommended in both pediatric and adult populations within the peri-anesthesia period.
- Guided imagery can be used in complement to traditional pain management or independently.
- Guided imagery can be utilized outside of the hospital setting:
  - Provide CDs, online links, and videos to patients for use at home.

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