THE EFFECTS OF MUSIC ON THE SURGICAL PATIENT FOR POSTOPERATIVE PAIN MANAGEMENT

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PURPOSE: Orthopedic surgery is frequently associated with significant postoperative pain, anxiety and subsequent increased amounts of opioid consumption, which have the potential to contribute to adverse outcomes. As an adjunct to traditional pharmacologic agents alternative treatment such as music during the immediate postoperative phase may decrease pain, anxiety and opioid consumption. The purpose of this quasi-experimental study is to examine the effects of music on postoperative pain management for orthopedic patients.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: The Gate control Theory of Pain Mechanisms (Melzack and Wall) was used to guide this research. Music functions as a distraction and refocuses the patient’s attention away from painful stimuli to something or someplace more pleasant and encouraging, thereby in essence “closing the gate” and inhibiting the transmission of pain signals.

METHOD: A convenience sample (N=140) of adult patients undergoing elective total joint replacements or spinal surgery were invited to participate. Pain intensity and anxiety were measured by separate visual analog scales. Outcome measures were collected preoperatively and postoperative after the music intervention. The intervention was delivered by having patients listen to pre-selected music via headset within 30 minutes of arrival to the Post-Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU) for 2 hours during the PACU stay. All other standards of care remain the same for all patients throughout their hospital stay. Data will be statistically analyzed using the t-test method to evaluate the difference in patients receiving music and those not receiving music.

RESULTS: Data analysis is pending, preliminary results will be reported.

CONCLUSIONS and IMPLICATIONS: This music intervention has the potential to improve postoperative outcomes and patient satisfaction by providing PACU nurses with alternative measures to decrease pain, anxiety and opioid consumption.