A FEASIBILITY STUDY USING THE ESSENTIAL OIL LAVENDER TO REDUCE PREOPERATIVE ANXIETY IN FEMALES UNDERGOING BREAST SURGERY

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Introduction: Preoperative anxiety is a common finding in patients waiting to have surgery that can lead to increased physical discomfort, delayed recovery time, and need for additional medications. Perianesthesia nurses are in the unique position to manipulate the preoperative environment with aromatherapy to decrease some of this anxiety.

Problem: Research shows preoperative anxiety as an issue for breast cancer patients. Studies using aromatherapy to decrease anxiety in varying populations have reported mixed results. Would inhalation of lavender aromatherapy reduce preoperative anxiety in patients awaiting breast cancer surgery?

Purpose: This study sought to describe the change in anxiety score from before to after aromatherapy; compare the difference in anxiety between treatment groups; describe subject’s satisfaction with aromatherapy.

Methodology: A randomized control trial of 40 breast cancer surgery patients was conducted. Anxiety was measured using the State Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) at three time points before surgery. Patient satisfaction was measured using a one-time self-report questionnaire. The changes in STAI score over time and between groups were tested using repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA).

Results: Twenty subjects were in the treatment group (mean age 60±11 yrs) and 19 in the control group (mean age 55±10 yrs). ANOVA indicated a significant decrease in anxiety over time (F13.3, p=0.000). The type of treatment had no significant effect on the anxiety scores. Yet, at 10 minutes, the treatment group declined from 45.2 to 38.7, while the control group decreased from 42.16 to 41.79. Questionnaire responses showed the treatment group was more satisfied with the use of aromatherapy and more likely to recommend the therapy to others.

Discussion: Aromatherapy is an effective nursing intervention to improve preoperative patient care. The randomized controlled study design with nasal inhaler aromatherapy improves upon previous studies.

Conclusion: This study provided a simple, low risk, cost-effective nursing intervention using direct delivery method of lavender inhalation showing it has the potential to alleviate situational anxiety for this specific cancer population.
**Implications:** These findings suggest that perianesthesia nurses can impact patient’s anxiety by changing the surgical environment. Further studies are needed showing its effectiveness with other high anxiety surgical populations.