

USING AROMATHERAPY AFTER SURGERY TO REDUCE ANXIETY

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Background Information: There is a link between mental and physical health. Anxiety is one of the most common problems before surgery. Studies have shown stress reduction to be important before and after surgery. Stress after surgery can cause increase in pain, nausea, it affects the vital signs, decreases patient satisfaction, and increases length of stay in the PACU. Aromatherapy has been used in the PACU for nausea and pain with shown success in previous studies.

Objectives of Project: Does the use of aromatherapy decrease post-operative anxiety? This study is to show that it does reduce anxiety for the patients and also have found it to reduce anxiety of the nurses.

Process of Implementation: Aromatherapy can be implemented post-operatively to reduce stress and anxiety. Drops of selected oils are placed on a cotton ball in a medicine cup with a piece of tape over the top, and given to the patient with instructions to inhale deeply as desired. Data was, and continued to be gathered, using an anxiety scale, along with observations of patient's demeanor.

Statement of Successful Practice: Aromatherapy has been found to help reduce anxiety on anxiety scales by 10.8% to 23% and research studies have shown that blood cortisol levels have reduced by 69.6%. Aromatherapy works by being absorbed through the nasal mucosa. Studies show aromatherapy produces characteristic physiological and psychological effects in the limbic system by being transformed into chemical signals, some can cross the blood brain barrier.

Implications for Advancing the Practice of Perianesthesia Nursing: Staff is educated in the proper safe use of the oils and how to evaluate patient's anxiety level. Patients are informed of the benefits of using aromatherapy and given a choice of oils that would benefit them. After showing the effectiveness of using the oils in PACU the plan is to start a study to show the benefits of using them pre-operative and also after transfer from the PACU to the floors to increase patient satisfaction.