Use of Therapeutic Inhaled Essential Oil in Treating Post Operative Nausea and Vomiting

Team Leader: Alison Taylor RN
William W. Backus Hospital, Norwich, Connecticut
Team Members: Julie Szolomayer MSN RN-BC, Kaitlin Bolster BSN RN CPAN CAPA

Background Information: Post-operative nausea and vomiting (PONV) is a common post-operative occurrence which can lead to a prolonged hospital stay, the need for additional medications, and general discomfort in post-operative patients.

Objectives of Project: The purpose of this project was to determine the efficacy of inhaled essential oils in relieving nausea and vomiting in the post-operative setting.

Process of Implementation: A 30 patient random trial using a passive diffuser with blended essential oils containing ginger, spearmint, peppermint and lavender was conducted. Post-operative patients rated the severity of their nausea on a 0-5 point Likert Scale. The Likert Scale rated nausea from requiring further intervention to full resolution of nausea after 5 minutes of use of therapeutic inhaled essential oil (TIEO).

Statement of Successful Practice: 26 out of 30 surveys were returned. Using a one sample t-test with the null hypothesis of no change, the project results in a significant finding ($p=0.001$) showing improvement after 5 minutes. Furthermore, the results found that 26.9% of patients in the study reported complete resolution of nausea after 5 minutes of treatment and an additional 46.2% of patient reported improvement in nausea after treatment.

Implications for Advancing the Practice of Perianesthesia Nursing: The use of TIEO proved to be effective as a first line intervention for treating post-operative nausea and vomiting. Implementation of TIEO in treating PONV is an independent nursing intervention which does not require an order from a provider, making it readily available for use. Furthermore, taking a holistic approach to treating PONV provides nurses additional options in treating this common condition in post-operative patients.