

Aromatherapy in the PACU

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Introduction: Post-operative nausea and vomiting (PONV) is one of the most common and distressing anesthesia related complications after surgery. Of the patients that experience PONV, 30% of patients experience vomiting while 50% experience nausea. High risk patients may have rates up to 80% (Odom-Forren, 2018). Patients need alternatives to the pharmacological interventions already provided. Aromatherapy inhalers with ginger, lavender, spearmint, and peppermint are a complementary, homeopathic, and a non-pharmacological option. Benefits of aromatherapy include reducing pain, eliminating/managing headaches, providing allergy relief, and anti-emetic properties (Stoicea, N., et. al., 2015).

Identification of the problem – Overview: PONV can lead to post-surgical complications and cause a delay in patient recovery. When patients are involved in their care, there is an increase in compliance of medical care, it increases their mental well-being, improves patient compliance with post operative care, patient outcomes, and promotes recuperation.

EP Question/Purpose: The purpose of this study is to determine if the use of aromatherapy will reduce the incidence of PONV in patients post-operatively.

Methods/Evidence: Patients were asked if they would like to try an aromatherapy inhaler for potential PONV. The aromatherapy inhaler was then proactively dispensed to patients with on set of any nausea and/or vomiting (N/V) as a first line intervention. The PACU nurse completed the questionnaire and placed it in the designated locations. If the aromatherapy inhale did not offer complete nausea relief, antiemetics were administered as ordered.

Significance of Findings/Outcomes: Of the 96 patients who participated in this EBP project, 62 (64.6%) received aromatherapy for PONV. 57 patients (91.9%) received the aromatherapy inhaler as a first line intervention. The majority of patients who received aromatherapy found it beneficial, with 71% (n=58) reporting either moderate or complete relief from PONV.

Implications for Perianesthesia nurses and future research: Aromatherapy is a branch of herbal medicine, in which the essential oils are absorbed into the body, resulting in strong physiologic, emotional, and psychologic reactions that are considered beneficial. Using non-pharmacologic treatment such as an aromatherapy inhaler reduces the patient's exposure to possible side effects they may endure from IV/IM medications administered and increase their satisfaction with their post-operative care.