THE INFLUENCE OF POLARITY THERAPY, MASSAGE, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, AND AGE ON FATIGUE IN BREAST CANCER (BC) PATIENTS DURING RADIATION THERAPY

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Abstract: Cancer and its treatments cause cancer-related fatigue (CRF). Research has shown that younger patients report a higher prevalence and severity of CRF compared to older patients; level of physical activity (PA) is significantly and indirectly correlated with level of CRF and that Polarity Therapy may be an effective intervention for improving CRF. Polarity therapy (PTH) and massage (MAS) both elicit a relaxation response that may be responsible for improvements in CRF. PTH is an integrative medical therapy that uses light touch without tissue manipulation, whereas MAS involves tissue manipulation. This 3-arm pilot study compared the influence of PTH, MAS and standard care on CRF, while controlling for age and level of PA, at baseline and week (wk) 1, 2, and 3. Randomly assigned breast cancer (BC) patients (N=45; mean age=52) received standard radiation plus 3 weekly treatments of PTH or MAS (75 minutes/session) or no additional treatments (control). A one-way ANOVA revealed significant differences in CRF between groups at baseline (p < 0.05) with follow-up comparisons demonstrating that PTH had a significantly higher level of CRF at baseline compared to the controls (p < 0.05). ANCOVAs, with baseline level of CRF as the independent variable, showed a significant difference between groups in mean level of CRF at week 2 (p < 0.05). Follow-up comparisons suggest that MAS participants showed a significantly lower level of CRF (p < 0.05) while PTH participants showed a statistical trend toward lower CRF (p < 0.10) compared to controls. Age was not a significant confounder (p > 0.10). ANCOVAs suggest that PA may be a confounder at week 2 (p < 0.10). PTH and MAS show promise as possible CAM treatments for CRF with a positive affect achieved at week 2. Age does not appear to affect the influence of PTH or MAS on CRF but PA may. Further studies are needed with a larger study sample to confirm these findings and to examine the use of these therapies throughout the entire radiation treatment time period. Future research is also needed among cancer patients with a wider variety of diagnoses and during different types of treatment as well as post-treatment.

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