Oncology Pain and Complementary Therapy: A Review of the Literature

Alice Running, PhD, RN, APN, and Elizabeth Turnbeaugh, MS, RN, APN

Half of all patients with cancer experience some level of pain, so pain management is an important topic for oncology nurses. Pharmacologic measures traditionally are the primary intervention for bone, visceral, neuropathic, and procedural pain; however, many patients are turning to an integrative approach of Western and complementary therapies for pain and symptom management. The authors explored the current evidence concerning the effectiveness of complementary therapies in relation to cancer pain and symptom control.

Uncontrolled pain can lead to physical and psychological distress. Cancer-related pain results from the interruption of bone, visceral, and neural structures because of direct tumor involvement or metastases and/or side effects of treatment. Cancer-related pain results from interruption of bone, visceral, and neural structures because of direct tumor involvement or metastases and/or side effects of treatment. Pain is the most common symptom experienced by patients diagnosed with cancer. Cancer-related pain results from the interruption of bone, visceral, and neural structures because of direct tumor involvement or metastases and/or side effects of treatment. Complementary therapies, such as massage therapy, acupuncture, therapeutic touch, and hypnosis, can be useful to reduce pain and associated symptoms.

Complementary therapies, such as massage therapy, acupuncture, therapeutic touch, and hypnosis, can be useful to reduce pain and associated symptoms. Pharmacologic measures traditionally are the primary intervention for bone, visceral, neuropathic, and procedural pain; however, many patients are turning to an integrative approach of Western and complementary therapies for pain and symptom management. The authors explored the current evidence concerning the effectiveness of complementary therapies in relation to cancer pain and symptom control.