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A PROSPECTIVE, RANDOMIZED STUDY OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF AROMATHERAPY FOR RELIEF OF POSTOPERATIVE NAUSEA AND VOMITING

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Background

- Postoperative nausea and vomiting (PONV) is the number one concern for patients having surgery under general anesthesia; it causes subjective distress, along with increased complications and delays in hospital discharge. Aromatherapy represents an alternative and complementary therapy for management of PONV.

Purpose

- To study the effectiveness of aromatherapy for PONV in postoperative patients admitted to the surgical unit for at least 24 hours.

Methods

- A prospective, randomized two group design with the treatment group receiving an aromatic inhaler (QueaseEASE®) and the control group receiving a placebo inhaler. Patients were recruited from the Surgical Services Center, enrolled 1-5 days prior to surgery, and received the study intervention with the first complaint of nausea. The self-administered inhaler was used as an immediate treatment for nausea. Patients completed two Likert-type scales rating nausea at baseline and after 3 minutes, and questionnaires addressing satisfaction with nausea treatment and perceived effectiveness of aromatherapy.

Results

- Of 339 enrolled patients, 121 patients experienced PONV; 25 patients were lost to attrition. A change score was computed for the initial and follow-up nausea assessment scores. Nausea scores in both the treatment group and the placebo group decreased significantly, $p < .01$ and $p < .01$ respectively, and there was a significant difference between the two groups, $p = .03$. Satisfaction with overall management of PONV was high regardless of group. Perceived effectiveness of aromatherapy was significantly higher in the treatment group, $p = .02$.

Implications

- Aromatherapy was favorably received by most patients and represents an effective treatment option for post-op nausea.