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Aromatherapy hand massage for older adults with chronic pain living in long-term care.

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Abstract

PURPOSE: Older adults living in long-term care experience high rates of chronic pain. Concerns with pharmacologic management have spurred alternative approaches. The purpose of this study was to examine a nursing intervention for older adults with chronic pain.

DESIGN: This prospective, randomized control trial compared the effect of aromatherapy M technique hand massage, M technique without aromatherapy, and nurse presence on chronic pain. Chronic pain was measured with the Geriatric Multidimensional Pain and Illness Inventory factors, pain and suffering, life interference, and emotional distress and the Iowa Pain Thermometer, a pain intensity scale.

METHOD: Three groups of 39 to 40 participants recruited from seven long-term care facilities participated twice weekly for 4 weeks. Analysis included multivariate analysis of variance and analysis of variance.

FINDINGS: Participants experienced decreased levels of chronic pain intensity. Group membership had a significant effect on the Geriatric Multidimensional Pain Inventory Pain and Suffering scores; Iowa Pain Thermometer scores differed significantly within groups.

CONCLUSIONS: M technique hand massage with or without aromatherapy significantly decreased chronic pain intensity compared to nurse presence visits. M technique hand massage is a safe, simple, but effective intervention. Caregivers using it could improve chronic pain management in this population.

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KEYWORDS: aromatherapy; chronic conditions; clinical/focus area; conceptual/theoretical descriptors/identifiers; group/population; healing modalities; integrative; massage therapy; older adults; presence

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