Music Versus Distraction for Procedural Pain and Anxiety in Patients With Cancer

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Key Points . . .
➤ Patients with cancer frequently experience noxious medical procedures that may provoke pain and anxiety. Cognitive-behavioral interventions such as music or distraction may help control pain for some patients having procedures.
➤ Although music may serve as a distracter, limiting attention available for pain, it also may influence pain by altering emotions, thoughts, and moods and by stimulating relaxation. However, in this study, the effects of music did not differ from those of simple distraction.
➤ Some patients want to attend to activities of the procedure and members of the healthcare team who are present. These patients may find cognitive-behavioral interventions to be bothersome and may prefer not to use them during the procedure.

Pain and anxiety are common symptoms experienced by people diagnosed with cancer (Bottomly, 1998; Clee-land et al., 1994; Newell, Swanson-Fisher, Girgis, & Ackland, 1999; Portenoy, Payne, & Jacobsen, 1999). Early in the experience of cancer, much of the pain and anxiety that patients experience is related to unfamiliar, frightening, and noxious medical procedures used in diagnosis and treatment of the disease such as tissue biopsy and placement of central venous access devices. Unrelieved pain and anxiety associated with these noxious procedures may lead to inability to complete procedures and withdrawal from therapy (Levin, Mermelstein, & Rigberg, 1999; Williams, 1997). Pain and anxiety experiences also may contribute to anticipatory distress and long-term psychological consequences such as intrusive memories, avoidance, and hyperarousal (Chrisler, 1994; Smith, Redd, Peyser, & Vogl, 1999). Cognitive-behavioral interventions such as the use of music or distraction may reduce procedural pain and anxiety. Although music can be used as a source of distraction, it also may reduce pain and anxiety by altering thoughts, emotions, or moods and by inducing relaxation (Chlan, 1998). Because of its additional mechanisms of action beyond merely distracting attention, music hypothetically may be more effective in the relief of pain and anxiety than a simple distraction intervention. The purpose of this study was to compare the effects of music, distraction, and treatment-as-usual (control) conditions on pain intensity and state anxiety in a group of patients having cancer-related medical procedures.

Background

Patients with cancer experience many medical procedures during the course of their illness. Diagnosis usually occurs with some type of invasive biopsy. For example, women with suspected breast cancer may have fine needle, core, or surgical breast biopsies; men with suspected prostate cancer may have prostate biopsies; and people with lymphoma may have lymph node biopsies. Treatment strategies such as chemotherapy often require the placement of central line catheters for extended or long-term infusions of chemotherapy, blood products, IV fluids, and, possibly, antibiotics or nutritional products and opinions related to those products do not indicate or imply endorsement by the Oncology Nursing Forum or the Oncology Nursing Society.)

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