Nurses consistently seek intervention strategies to reduce cancer symptoms and treatment-associated stress and to facilitate healing and feelings of well-being. Interventions often are considered complementary to traditional cancer treatment. Cancer remains the cause of one in four deaths in the United States and is the second-leading cause of death. Estimates indicate that about 1.4 million people are newly diagnosed with cancer and 560,000 die from the disease annually (American Cancer Society, 2007). Despite those statistics, patients with cancer are living longer and may undergo multiple rounds of therapy during treatment of their initial episode and later recurrences, making a wide range of interventions potentially beneficial.

**Literature Review**

**Complementary Therapy**

To reduce stress and anxiety associated with cancer, patients need to retain a sense of control over their bodies and participate in their treatment as much as they can in the context of advanced technology (Jordan & Delunas, 2001). That need has stimulated interest in and use of a wide array of complementary therapies. For example, in a sample of 453 patients with cancer, 83% had used at least one complementary therapy (Richardson, Sanders, Palmer, Greisinger, & Singletary, 2000). In a classic study, the therapies were found to help patients participate in their care (Coss, McGrath, & Caggiano, 1998).

**Animal-Assisted Activity**

Johnson, Meadows, Haubner, and Sevedge (2003) argued that animal-assisted activity (AAA) (i.e., pet visitation) meets...