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CREATIVE ARTS THERAPY MAY IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR PEDIATRIC CANCER PATIENTS

GLENVIEW, IL – As health care professionals continue placing greater emphasis on the quality of life (QOL) of childhood cancer patients, researchers have found that creative arts therapy (CAT) may improve QOL in pediatric oncology patients undergoing therapy. Their findings were published in the May/June edition of *Journal of Pediatric Oncology Nursing*, published by the Association of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology Nurses (APHON).

“By using creative expression, a child or adolescent with cancer can express feelings about the course of the disease and tumultuous treatment through dance/movement, music, and art. This outlet allows the patient to creatively and kinesthetically process the assaults of cancer and its treatment, and thus establish a stronger sense of self and improved quality of life,” the authors wrote.

Jennifer R. Madden, MS, RN, CPNP, of the University of Colorado Medical School, Denver, and colleagues conducted their research in three phases – a small, randomized pilot with brain tumor patients only, a descriptive study observing all eligible hematology/oncology patients who received CAT, and qualitative interviews with medical and nursing providers.

“Little is known about the effect of CAT on QOL in children receiving chemotherapy in the outpatient venue,” the authors wrote. “Because many children spend 4 to 8 hours in the infusion room, patients, parents, and staff have verbalized the need for additional stimuli such as arts and crafts or music to make the hours spent receiving treatment more tolerable. In addition, there are continuous requests for psychological support from patients and staff. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effect of CAT on the QOL of brain tumor patients and subsequently all patients receiving infusions in the outpatient hematology/oncology clinic at a tertiary care pediatric hospital.”

“All participating patients and parents reported satisfaction with the CAT intervention and stated that they would like to see the program continue. Future research investigating biophysical measurements or specific symptoms (pain, nausea) is warranted to provide concrete evidence to the medical community of the benefit of CAT. In addition, in this era of holistic nursing, CAT is the perfect example of how a nurse can involve the whole patient using the creative arts to aid in healing from the traumatic treatment of cancer in a child,” the authors concluded.

Editor's Note: Please see the article for additional information, including other authors, author contributions and affiliations, financial disclosures, funding and support, etc.

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