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Safety and side effects of touch therapy as a supportive method for pain management in patients with cancer

Mohammad Fathi

Shahid Beheshti Medical University, Iran

Background: Pain is one the most common symptoms in different types of cancer which can interfere with patient's quality of life. Although there are many medicines and methods available to control cancer pain, the use of complementary and non-drug techniques such as touch therapy has been growing. This study is aimed at critically evaluating the clinical impacts, safety and side effects of touch therapy as a supportive method for pain relief in patients with cancer.

Methods: Electronic databases of CINAHL, Google Scholar, PubMed, Elsevier and Ovid were searched from 1998 to 2013. According to our keywords 503 relevant studies were found. Additionally, among 12 related articles, 6 clinical trials, semi-experimental, case-control and cohort studies were selected and examined in accordance with the objectives of this study.

Results: The number of 2 clinical trials, 1 semi-experimental, 2-cohort and 1 case control study was found on the basis of 413 patients with cancer. No study reported important side effects of touch therapy.

Conclusions: Based on the results, touch therapy can be used as a non-invasive intervention to control pain in patients with cancer. Generally, this technique can be a safe method in pain management of patients with cancer.

Fathi_mansor@yahoo.com