

Alternative Therapies for Chronic Pain

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Significance Statement

In patients experiencing chronic pain, what is the effect of alternative therapy compared to utilizing only pharmacological interventions on pain control?

Key Methodology

- A nonrandomized single-arm clinical trial that studied the effectiveness of incorporating medical cannabis as an alternative therapy in conjunction with the patient's pharmacological pain management regimen.³
- A randomized control trial that studied the effectiveness of incorporating mirror therapy into the plan of care for patients who underwent post-traumatic amputation of a limb and were experiencing phantom limb pain.²
- A randomized control trial that studied the effectiveness of lavender essential oil for patients experiencing chronic pain undergoing lumbar epidural steroid injections and lumbar medial branch blocks. Five drops of the essential oil were applied to a surgical mask before the procedure started.¹
- A randomized control trial that evaluated the effectiveness of auricular acupuncture in cancer patients with chronic pain. This study focused on the minimization of prescription medications.⁴

Key Findings

Cannabis Therapy

- The use of medical cannabis treatments resulted in lower reported pain scores on the numerical rating scale and higher reported functional ability scores on the Pain Disability Index scale.³
- Improvement in functional daily activities resulted from decreased pain.³
- The use of cannabis also showed to decrease both anxiety and depression.³

Mirror Therapy

- Using mirror therapy as part of a treatment regimen resulted in short-term increased quality of life as seen with statistically significant lower pain intensity scores.²

Aromatherapy

- The use of lavender essential oils was effective in reducing pain levels in patients undergoing lumbar procedures.¹
- The lavender aromatherapy did not reduce the amount of anxiety experienced with the procedure.¹

Auricular Acupuncture

- Auricular acupuncture significantly decreased the intensity of pain and reduced the use of pain medications.⁴
- Auricular acupuncture caused a change in the classification of pain in the participants.⁴

Recommended Key Practices

Cannabis Therapy

- Educate healthcare professionals on the positive effects of integrating cannabis as an alternative therapy for patients with chronic pain.³
- Ensure that possible biases are discussed during educational programs to prevent hesitancy when incorporating the use of medical cannabis into practice.³

Mirror Therapy

- Train therapists or nurses in hospitals on the effects of mirror therapy on phantom limb pain for patients post-amputation.²
- Educate them about how it is done and the statistical significance of the study on pain.²

Aromatherapy

- Train healthcare professionals on the effect of aromatherapy on pain.¹
- Educate on how aromatherapy can be used as a first-line therapy to decrease pain levels due to how noninvasive and cost-effective it can be.¹

Auricular Acupuncture

- Educate nurses and health care providers on the positive effects of auricular acupuncture for chronic pain in cancer patients.⁴
- Provide education on the data of reduction of prescription pain medication after the use of acupuncture.⁴

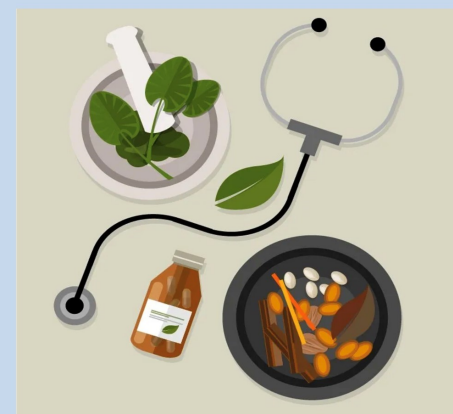


Figure 1

References

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Figure List

Figure 1. [Alternative Therapies Photo] . Deposit Photos. <https://depositphotos.com/vector-images/integrative-medicine.html>