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Can Non-Pharmacological Interventions Effectively Reduce Anxiety and Pain in Chronic Pediatric Patients?

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Abstract

Pediatric anxiety and pain have been historically poorly managed. The failure of providers to adequately address medically-induced anxiety and pain in pediatric patients has been shown to prevent them from proactively seeking medical care in the future and has been linked with both altered brain development and increased risk of opioid abuse. Furthermore, poorly managed pain leads to sustained levels of cortisol and exposes patients to several long-term health risks like hypertension. Because non-pharmacological interventions are often preferred by providers, patients, and their caregivers, this research question poses an exploration of the efficacy of non-traditional methods in alleviating procedure-related anxiety and pain in chronic pediatric patients. The objectives of this investigation were to closely examine the relationship between anxiety and pain reduction and non-pharmacological interventions such as aromatherapy, digital distractions, and music therapy. Using the PRISMA checklist, researchers reviewed literature from the previous ten years including eight peer-reviewed publications in total—studies of chronic pediatric patients, defined as those under the age of twenty-five years, living in North America and coping with chronic pain, disease, or illness, with non-traditional interventions. The reviewed literature supports a correlation between effective pain management and reduced long-term health complications; it also suggests a relationship between non-pharmacological interventions and successful pain reduction with fewer side effects and risks, making it more efficacious for pediatric patients. Based on these premises, the project is considered successful if the experimental data show a direct relationship between non-pharmacological interventions and a substantial and acceptable reduction in procedural anxiety in chronic pediatric patients.

Keywords: pediatric pain management, digital distractions in peds, aromatherapy in peds, music for pain relief in peds, nonpharmacological pediatric interventions