

# Using Relaxation and Guided Imagery to Address Pain, Fatigue, and Sleep Disturbances: A Pilot Study

Angela K. Nooner, MBA, MSN, APRN, ACCNS-AG, OCN®, Kathleen Dwyer, PhD, RN, Lise DeShea, PhD, and Theresa P. Yeo, PhD, MPH, AOCNP®



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**Background:** Few studies have been conducted on the use of patient-controlled relaxation and guided imagery interventions for the symptom cluster of pain, fatigue, and sleep disturbance during cancer treatment.

**Objectives:** The primary aim of this study was to evaluate the feasibility, acceptability, and participant satisfaction with use of patient-controlled relaxation and/or imagery interventions for pain, fatigue, and sleep disturbance. A secondary aim was to examine the data for trends in pain, fatigue, and sleep improvement because of the effects of relaxation and guided imagery.

**Methods:** Twelve adult patients with cancer were randomized to one of four groups: a guided imagery intervention, a relaxation intervention, a combined intervention using guided imagery and relaxation, or usual care. Pain, fatigue, and sleep disturbance were assessed upon enrollment and at 30 and 60 days. Patients' scores were obtained using the Patient-Reported Outcomes Measurement Information System (PROMIS) Pain Interference Short Form, PROMIS Fatigue Short Form, and PROMIS Sleep Disturbance Short Form tools.

**Findings:** Patients reported a high degree of satisfaction with the relaxation and guided imagery interventions. Patients in the relaxation and guided imagery or combined groups showed a trend toward improvement in fatigue and sleep disturbance scores. Pain remained a problem for the majority of patients. Difficulties in recruiting participants resulted in an insufficient sample size for generalizable findings. With hospital environments tending to be noisy, relaxation and guided imagery may facilitate rest and sleep for hospitalized patients. An examination of individual scores showed a trend toward improvement in sleep quality.

Angela K. Nooner, MBA, MSN, APRN, ACCNS-AG, OCN®, is an oncology clinical nurse specialist at the Oklahoma University Medical Center in Oklahoma City; Kathleen Dwyer, PhD, RN, is a professor and Henry J. Freede Chair in Nursing Science, and Lise DeShea, PhD, is a senior research biostatistician in the College of Nursing, both at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center in Oklahoma City; and Theresa P. Yeo, PhD, MPH, AOCNP®, is co-director of the Jefferson Pancreas Tumor Registry, a surgical oncology nurse practitioner in the Department of Surgery at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital, and an adjunct associate professor in the Jefferson College of Nursing at Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia, PA. The authors take full responsibility for the content of the article. Nooner and Yeo were participants in the *Clinical Journal of Oncology Nursing (CJON)* Writing Mentorship Program. This study was supported, in part, by a grant from the DAISY Foundation. The content of this article has been reviewed by independent peer reviewers to ensure that it is balanced, objective, and free from commercial bias. No financial relationships relevant to the content of this article have been disclosed by the independent peer reviewers or editorial staff. Nooner can be reached at [angela.nooner@hcahealthcare.com](mailto:angela.nooner@hcahealthcare.com), with copy to editor at [CJONEditor@ons.org](mailto:CJONEditor@ons.org). (Submitted September 2015. Revision submitted November 2015. Accepted for publication November 28, 2015.)

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Despite improvements in diagnosis and treatment, many patients with hematologic malignancies still experience undesirable symptoms and side effects that undermine quality of life. The primary purpose of this study was to evaluate the feasibility, acceptability, and participant satisfaction with the use of patient-controlled relaxation and imagery interventions for pain, fatigue, and sleep disturbance in a population

of patients with hematologic malignancies and solid tumors. A secondary aim was to examine the data for trends in pain, fatigue, and sleep improvement because of the effects of relaxation and guided imagery.

Studies have shown that as many as 96% of patients with cancer experience fatigue during treatment and after therapy has been completed (Finnegan-John, Molassiotis, Richardson, & Ream, 2013; Yeo & Cannaday, 2015). The National