

Therapeutic Care Interventions to reduce Acute Pain amongst Hospitalised Patients: A Pilot Study

Background: Therapeutic Care (TC) is an umbrella programme running across a hospital site, with the aim of making patients' hospital stays more comfortable by providing general stimulation and coordinating activities to improve patient experiences. This project involved collaboration between the Acute Pain Team (APT) and the TC team.

Aims and objectives: The aim of this pilot study was to investigate whether TC interventions are effective in distracting patients experiencing acute pain, and in turn, lowering self-report pain ratings. It was also aimed to investigate patient perceptions of the TC service, in terms of the interventions used within the service.

Method: A questionnaire was developed using the 0-10 pain intensity numeric rating scale (NRS), which is a well-validated measure, and easy to administer in terms of time and simplicity. The questionnaire was administered verbally to 15 patients across wards including post-operative and trauma, following liaison between APT and TC team assessing which patients would benefit from intervention. Pain intensity before the intervention was measured using the self-report NRS. The TC intervention was then carried out (e.g. engagement with patient and movement around the hospital). Self-report NRS was then measured post-intervention. Patients were also asked if TC had distracted them from their pain, and which activities would be of most benefit, and whether they would recommend the service to other patients.

Main results: A paired-samples t-test showed a statistically significant difference between patients' pre-intervention NRS scores ($M = 7.4$) compared to the post-intervention scores ($M = 5.0$), which was a mean reduction of 2.4, $t(14) = 6.187$, $p < 0.01$, $d = 0.85$. Talking to the TC team was cited the most frequently (11 patients) as being an effective distractor from pain, followed by simply having some company and moving around the hospital (both cited by 7 patients). 60% of patients reported that TC had distracted them from their pain, with 26.7% reporting that this was true to a certain extent, 6.7% being unsure, and 6.7% reporting that this had not been the case. 53.3% reported that they were extremely likely recommend TC to other patients experiencing acute pain, whilst 33.3% reported that they were likely, and 13.3% reported that they were neither likely or unlikely to do so.

Conclusions: These results are the foundations of a larger, ongoing collaborative project and offer a firm basis for continuing to investigate the role of TC and pain management. The authors explain the reduction in pain scores post-intervention in terms of a distraction effect, whereby there is competition for attention between pain (a highly salient sensation) and focus being consciously directed on processing information from another activity (TC intervention). The activities reported as being effective by patients are in line with previous literature on distraction therapy.