Pilot Study to Examine the Effects of Art Therapy During Chemotherapy on Stress and Quality of Life in Patients with Stage 3 Colon Cancer

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Colon cancer ranks within the top two causes of cancer deaths worldwide (Contract, Mackley, and Irby, 2011). Despite aggressive treatment and recent advances within the medical field, colon cancer continues to be a leading cause of death (Contract, Mackley, and Irby, 2011). It is expected that 103,170 cases of colon cancer will be reported in 2012, and approximately 51,690 individuals diagnosed with colon cancer will die within the 2012 year. (American Cancer Society, 2012).

One of the most common treatments for colon cancer is chemotherapy (American Cancer Society, 2012). Chemotherapy for colon cancer has been found to impact an individual’s quality of life and can lead to overall deterioration (Graca, Figueiredo, and Fincham, in press). Elkis-Abuhoff, Goldblatt, Gaydos, and Corrado (2008) found that the application of art therapy with patients undergoing treatment for Parkinson’s disease helped decrease somatic dysfunction and emotional distress. Bridging the chemotherapy experience with a non-invasive treatment, such as art therapy, can be adjunctive to standard medical procedures (Elkis-Abuhoff et al, 2009). With technology the application of art therapy can be applied while also maintaining the clean environment that is essential during the chemotherapy process.

This study followed patients diagnosed with colon cancer through their chemotherapy protocol to assess for emotional well-being. The researchers believe that by incorporating technology based art therapy, those who are receiving chemotherapy for Stage 3 colon cancer will have a decrease in stress and an enhancement of quality of life.
All participants were diagnosed with colon cancer stage III, receiving their medical treatment through a major health system’s cancer treatment center within the metropolitan New York area in the United States, receiving a standard protocol of chemotherapy, and randomized to either the treatment or control group.

Patients were randomized into two groups, the experimental group and a control group. The control group received their standard treatment and was assessed with standardized assessments tools (the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-4; Cohen and Williamson, 1988) and the FACT-C (Ward et al. 1999) for levels of stress and quality of life throughout the study. The experimental group added an art therapy component to treatment, which comprised of an iPad utilizing creative applications, along with their standard chemotherapy treatment. These participants received an in-service to orient them to the use of the iPad and the specific applications. When they entered into the chemotherapy room they received an iPad for use during the entire time of their chemotherapy session. When the participant completed their engagement with the iPad, or when their chemotherapy session had concluded, they were asked to save at least one piece of artwork. The experimental group was also assessed throughout for stress levels and quality of life utilizing the PSS-4 (Cohen and Williamson, 1988) and the FACT-C (Ward et al. 1999).

After the chemotherapy protocol was completed the participants completed an exit information questionnaire and a final PSS-4 (Cohen and Williamson, 1988) and FACT-C (Ward et al. 1999). All data was analyzed accordingly, and results will be presented and discussed.
References


