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Review

Effectiveness of massage therapy on post-operative outcomes among patients undergoing cardiac surgery: A systematic review



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ABSTRACT

The incidence and prevalence of cardiovascular disease (CVD) are increasing rapidly in developing countries. Most patients with CVD do not respond to medical treatment and have to undergo cardiac surgery. This highly stressful experience results in increased levels of anxiety for patients. The objective of this review was to evaluate the efficacy of massage therapy on postoperative outcomes among patients undergoing cardiac surgery. A comprehensive literature search was made on PubMed-Medline, CINAHL, Science Direct, Scopus, Web of Science and the Cochrane library databases for original research articles published between 2000 and 2015. Original articles that reported the efficacy of massage therapy in patients undergoing cardiac surgery were included. The Cochrane data extraction form was used to extract data. A total of 297 studies were identified in the literature search. However, only seven studies were eligible for analysis. Of the seven studies, six studies demonstrated the effects of massage therapy on improving post-operative outcomes of patients, while one study found no evidence of improvement. Although the methods varied considerably, most of the studies included in this review reported positive results. Therefore, there is some evidence that massage therapy can lead to positive postoperative outcomes. Evidence of the effectiveness of massage therapy in patients undergoing cardiac surgery remains inconclusive. Additional research is needed to provide a strong evidence base for the use of massage therapy to improve post-operative outcomes and recovery among cardiac surgery patients

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1. Introduction

Every year the number of cardiac surgeries is increasing steadily in India and other developing countries due to a high prevalence of CVD [1,2]. Postoperative outcomes such as severe pain, anxiety, psychological distress and sleep disturbance are commonly associated with recovery from cardiac surgery. These factors may compromise the effective of their treatment and quality of life of patients undergoing major heart surgery [3]. Pain can prolong a patient's post-operative stay in the hospital and affects their satisfaction level [4]. There is a need for clinicians and nurses to identify safe and effective therapeutic interventions to use following a major cardiac surgery [5].

In recent years, there has been a focus on complimentary therapies to manage or alleviate pain and anxiety. These therapies have many noninvasive techniques that are cost effective and simple with fewer side effects when compared to drugs [6]. Complimentary therapies are used as adjuvant therapy alongside conventional medical treatments to enhance overall health and promote a faster recovery. Massage therapy is one type of complimentary therapy and is recognized as an essential part of health and wellness [7–9]. Body massages have been tested in different populations and

found to have marked effect in decreasing pain and anxiety [10].

Nurses caring for patients during the post-operative period find it challenging to manage their pain and anxiety. Although analgesic drugs are helpful in reducing pain, the adverse effects lead to further discomfort. Therefore, there is a need for nurses to have scientifically tested, simple and effective interventions to manage the pain and anxiety. A steady, emerging body of evidence suggests that massage therapy is vital to the healing process of patients undergoing general surgery. However, very little is known about their effectiveness in cardiac surgery patients. The objective of this review was to evaluate the efficacy of massage therapy on post-operative outcomes among patients undergoing cardiac surgery.

2. Methods

2.1. Design

This review was conducted according to the guidelines described in the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses (PRISMA). The PRISMA includes a

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