Complementary and Integrative Therapies to Reduce Cancer Related Fatigue

Sean Zhou Morash

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Complementary and Integrative Therapies to Reduce Cancer Related Fatigue

by

Sean Zhou Morash

An Honors Capstone

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the Honors Diploma

to

The Honors College

of

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Honors Capstone Director: Dr. Ann Bianchi

Associate Professor, College of Nursing

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Sean Morash

Student Name (printed)

Sean Morash

Student Signature

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Table of Contents

Abstract 3
Introduction 4
Review of Literature 4
Product Development 6
Results 7
Limitations 7
Discussion 7
Implications to Nursing Practice 8
Conclusions 9
References 10

Appendix A: Fighting Cancer Fatigue: A Look at Complementary and Integrative Medical Therapies 12
Abstract

**Background:** Cancer related fatigue is one of the most common side effects of cancer and its associated treatments. It may last months or years after cancer treatment is finished and can severely impact quality of life. Studies have shown that various nonpharmacological complementary and integrative medicine therapies can help to reduce and manage cancer related fatigue.

**Project Development:** This project seeks to create a booklet that can increase awareness of, and provide information on, the nature of complementary integrative medicine therapies that may reduce cancer related fatigue as well as the availability of these therapies in the local area. A literature review was conducted to identify the ten most effective complementary therapies that have research evidence supporting their use in the reduction of cancer fatigue. The 10 identified therapies are outlined in the booklet, along with a brief description of each therapy. A further internet search was also conducted to find businesses that provided any of the 10 identified complementary therapies in the Huntsville and Northern Alabama and southeastern TN area. Each identified treatment option includes a description of the therapy and its benefits and risks, a description of the business that offers the therapy, and the contact information for the business.

**Results:** The finished booklet was distributed to the Clearview Cancer Institutes at Huntsville, Crestwood, and Decatur.

**Discussion:** This project’s purpose is to improve the quality of life of cancer patients suffering from cancer related fatigue by providing the booklet to cancer centers in the Huntsville, AL area and increasing patients’ access to basic information about complementary therapies that they can find locally.
Introduction

Cancer related fatigue is one of the most common side effects of cancer and its associated treatments. Unlike normal fatigue, it does not usually result from exertion and is not relieved by rest (Mudumbi & Tang, 2016). The exact cause of cancer related fatigue is unknown and may be related to the disease itself as well as treatments such as chemotherapy or radiation therapy. It can be debilitating, long lasting, and can severely impact quality of life. Cancer related fatigue is often more distressing than other symptoms like pain or nausea. In many patients, it can last months or years after cancer treatment is finished (Mudumbi & Tang, 2016). Cancer related fatigue has also been linked with various psychological symptoms and mood disorders. According to Mudumbi and Tang (2016), cancer fatigue is often reported in cancer survivors who have sleep disturbance, pain, distress, depression, lymphedema, higher body mass index (BMI), and decreased activity levels. As a result, cancer related fatigue can have a significant impact on function and quality of life. However, studies have shown that various nonpharmacological therapies can be used in conjunction with normal care to have a positive effect on cancer symptoms, reducing fatigue and improving quality of life (Kampshoff et al., 2015). The purpose of this project is to identify the most effective complementary and integrative medicine therapies for reducing fatigue in adult cancer patients, and create an informational booklet describing these therapies and where to find them.

Review of Literature

A review of literature was conducted to find effective evidence based nonpharmacological complementary and integrative medicine therapies for managing cancer related fatigue. PubMed and CINHAL were searched using terms such as cancer, fatigue, complimentary therapies, integrative therapies, nonpharmacological, holistic, and treatment.
Articles were further screening through the selection of articles in English language and published in the years between 2010-2019. The therapies were chosen based on three criteria: effectiveness at reducing cancer related fatigue, safety of the therapy, and availability in the Northern Alabama and southeastern Tennessee area. A total of 32 articles were reviewed, with ten therapies identified for inclusion in the booklet. These therapies are acupuncture, massage therapy, yoga, medical qigong, music therapy, art therapy, exercise, reflexology, guided imagery, and hypnosis. The therapies varied in the strength of the evidence supporting their effectiveness, with some such as exercise and yoga having multiple well designed studies examining their use on a variety of populations, while therapies such as reflexology that had fewer studies and only researched specific populations like breast cancer patients were also included due to the low risks associated with their use.

Once the therapies were identified, an additional internet search was completed to assure there were providers for each of the therapies in the Northern Alabama and southeastern Tennessee region. Two therapies initially identified lacked qualified providers in the area and were replaced with physical therapy and music therapy after a further literature review and internet search. The final therapy selection includes nonpharmacological complementary and integrative medicine therapies with providers spread across Northern Alabama and into the Nashville area of southeastern Tennessee. Of these, the more popular therapies like acupuncture and yoga have many service providers and clinics all throughout the chosen area. Others, like medical qigong or polarity therapy, have very few official businesses, but may have individual practitioners that patients can seek out themselves through websites and directories such as the Qigong Institute website at or the American Polarity Therapy Association website. Some therapies such as exercise and guided imagery can be practiced and learned in a professional
setting such as at physical therapy or a clinic or simply by oneself through internet research or referral from a medical professional. The wide range of options and methods available for relieving cancer related fatigue allows individuals the flexibility to tailor their care to their own desires.

**Product Development**

The final booklet is designed to provide information about the effectiveness and availability nonpharmacological complementary and integrative medicine therapies to reduce cancer related fatigue to patients undergoing cancer treatments. The first section is an introduction that explains what cancer related fatigue is and what its symptoms are. It also explains the nature of nonpharmacological complementary and integrative medicine therapies, with an emphasis on how they are meant to be used in conjunction with conventional cancer treatments and not as a replacement to them. Patients are also advised to discuss with their doctor before starting any nonpharmacological complementary and integrative medicine therapies, as certain types of cancer or other health factors may potentially contraindicate the use of some therapies.

The major content of the pamphlet discusses the nonpharmacological complementary and integrative medicine therapies themselves. Each therapy has a short description with information such as what the therapy is, how the therapy works, what receiving the therapy will involve, what effects the therapy may have, and what the risks are. Every therapy has at least one business or clinic that provides the therapy. Each of these businesses will also have a description with information such as what services they offer, what qualifications and certifications they possess, and where their business is located. At the end of the booklet is a table with the phone number and website for each of the businesses listed.
Results

The finished booklet is twelve pages long, with an introduction, one page each for the ten therapies, and a page containing the contact information of the providers. The booklet was distributed to the Clearview Cancer Institutes at Huntsville, AL, Crestwood Medical Center, Huntsville, AL, and Decatur, AL.

Limitations

A limitation of this project is that the booklet does not provide a comprehensive list of therapies that reduce cancer related fatigue or providers of the therapies. Only the top ten therapies that are safe, have evidence supporting their effectiveness, and are available in the Northern Alabama and southeastern Tennessee area are included in the booklet. As a result, there may be other effective therapies that are not included. Some of the studies in the literature review also had limitations such as weak designs or were limited to certain demographics, such as female breast cancer patients. The providers were also found with an Internet search that focused on businesses and their locations rather than certification levels and individual practitioners. Finally, the effectiveness of these therapies may vary highly based the individual performing the therapeutic intervention and the patient. Some of these disparities may be due to differences in age, gender, ethnicity, type of cancer and treatment received, cultural and religious beliefs, or practitioner training.

Discussion

Due to the debilitating and long-lasting nature of cancer related fatigue, effective therapies can greatly improve quality of life in cancer patients (Wanchi, Armer, & Stewart, 2011). However, the effectiveness of pharmacologic therapies in managing cancer related fatigue has not been sufficiently researched with randomized controlled trials using placebos. Because of
THERAPIES TO REDUCE CANCER FATIGUE

the lack of proven pharmacological therapies for managing cancer related fatigue, this project’s purpose is to improve patients’ quality of life by helping to fill that gap with the use of nonpharmacological complementary and integrative medicine therapies. By providing the booklet to cancer centers in the North Alabama area patients may gain access to basic information about nonpharmacological complementary and integrative medicine therapies that can be found locally. Patients are encouraged to do their own research about the types of nonpharmacological complementary and integrative medicine therapies listed in this booklet or potentially other therapies as well as providers. The therapies listed in the booklet range from those that require paying a certified provider, such as acupuncture or massage therapy, to those that can be practiced for free in the comfort of one’s home, such as guided imagery or yoga. This variety provides patients with the option to choose a therapy convenient for them based on their schedule, degree of commitment, and financial means. Furthermore, this project may have the benefit of increasing awareness and knowledge of complementary and integrative medicine therapies as a whole, for a variety of uses other than cancer related fatigue.

Implications to Nursing Practice

Nurses who care for cancer patients can use this booklet to educate patients who may suffer or are suffering from cancer related fatigue. Many nurses already use techniques such as guided imagery to help relieve pain. However, research shows that these therapies may be effective in managing cancer related fatigue as well (Charalambous, Giannakopoulou, Bozas, Marcou, Kitsios, & Paikousis, 2016). Since guided imagery is a relatively simple technique that can be performed in both an inpatient and outpatient setting, nurses can teach guided imagery to cancer patients who have cancer related fatigue or are likely to develop cancer fatigue during the
THERAPIES TO REDUCE CANCER FATIGUE

course of their cancer treatment. Nurses can also use the booklet as a reference to inform cancer patients of non-allopathic therapies.

Conclusion

Cancer related fatigue is one of the most common side effects of cancer, but management may reduce the severity of fatigue, thus leading to an increase in the quality of life for cancer patients (Mudumbi & Tang, 2016). Studies have shown that there are several complementary and integrative medicine therapies that can help to reduce cancer related fatigue when used in conjunction with conventional medical treatments (Finnegan-John, Molassiotis, Richardson, & Ream, 2013).

This project’s purpose was to increase patients’ awareness of these nonpharmacological complementary and integrative medicine therapies by designing and distributing a booklet to inform them of what some of these nonpharmacological complementary and integrative medicine therapies are and where to access them. Unfortunately, some of these therapies have limited research on their effectiveness, especially among different demographic groups. Furthermore, not all complementary therapies are closely regulated, require licensure, and few practitioners have specific training for dealing with cancer patients. Future research should focus on studying the effectiveness of these nonpharmacological complementary and integrative medicine therapies on cancer related fatigue as well as other medical conditions, and examining the qualifications required for various therapies to ensure the practitioners can provide safe and effective treatment.
References


THERAPIES TO REDUCE CANCER FATIGUE


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Appendix A

Fighting Cancer Fatigue: A Look at Complementary and Integrative Medical Therapies
Fighting Cancer Fatigue
A LOOK AT COMPLIMENTARY AND INTEGRATIVE MEDICAL THERAPIES

An Honors Capstone Project by:
Sean Morash
for

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA IN HUNTSVILLE
HONORS COLLEGE
Introduction

Complementary and integrative medicine are non-mainstream practices and therapies that are used together with Western Medicine. Complementary therapies are not considered part of conventional medical care and may have origins outside of usual Western practice. In cancer care, the purpose of complementary therapies is not to treat the cancer itself. Instead, it should be used in conjunction with traditional medicine to help manage and treat the symptoms of cancer and the side effects of cancer treatment. When health care combines both conventional and complementary practices in a coordinated way, it is considered integrative medicine.

Cancer related fatigue is one of the most common side effects of cancer and its associated treatments. Unlike normal fatigue, it does not usually result from exertion and is not relieved by rest. The exact cause of cancer related fatigue is unknown and may be related to the disease itself as well as treatments such as chemotherapy or radiation therapy. It can be debilitating, long lasting, and can severely impact quality of life.

However, studies have shown that there are various complementary therapies that can have a positive effect on the symptoms of cancer and cancer treatment, reducing fatigue and improving quality of life. This booklet describes some of these complementary therapies with examples of providers that can be found near the Huntsville area. This is not a comprehensive list of therapies or providers. The ones mentioned here were found with a simple Google search about providers for the respective complementary therapies in the area around Huntsville and Northern Alabama. Not all complementary therapies will work for everyone. Before starting a complementary therapy, be sure to do your research and consult with your healthcare provider to discuss the possible benefits and risks in order to make an informed decision.
Acupuncture

Acupuncture is a traditional Chinese medicine that has been practiced for thousands of years. It is based on the premise that a blockage or disturbance in the flow of the body's life energy, or "qi," can cause health issues. Acupuncturists insert hair-thin needles to specific acupuncture points throughout the body to restore the flow of qi, balance the body’s energy, stimulate healing, and promote relaxation.

While doctors are still not completely sure how acupuncture works, numerous studies have shown its effectiveness in treating many cancer related symptoms, including fatigue, nausea, pain, and anxiety.

Acupuncture is generally considered safe when done by a licensed practitioner. Common side effects include minor bleeding and bruising. These problems can be exacerbated in those with clotting disorders or are on blood thinners. Consult with your doctor before starting acupuncture.

Internet link: http://www.drly.net/

Local Access: The Dr. Ly Natural Health Clinic for Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine was established in 1982 and has three locations in Huntsville, Muscle Shoals, and Memphis. It was founded by Alexander Ly, who has over fifty years of experience practicing acupuncture and Chinese medicine. His team also includes three MDs, two of which are neurologists and the third is an Acupuncture Detoxification Specialist, two Licensed Acupuncturists, and a Registered Dietician Nutritionist.
Art Therapy

Art therapy involves the use of creative techniques such as drawing, painting, collage, coloring, or sculpting to help people express themselves artistically and examine the psychological and emotional undertones in their art. Art therapy, facilitated by a professional art therapist, effectively supports personal and relational treatment goals as well as community concerns.

Studies have shown that art therapy can be used to improve cognitive and sensorimotor functions, foster self-esteem and self-awareness, and treat anxiety, depression, and fatigue.

Internet link: https://www.treeoflifebehavioral.com/index.html

Local Access: Tree of Life Behavioral Health is an outpatient therapy center that offers a variety of services to adults, children, adolescents, families, and couples. These services include Art Therapy, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Dialectic Behavioral Therapy, EMDR, Narrative Therapy, Jungian Analysis and more to help treat a number of issues. Their licensed, professional staff consists of several Licensed Professional Counselors and offer all services on a sliding scale based on the income of the patient.
Guided imagery

Guided imagery is a form of focused relaxation that helps create harmony between the mind and body. It involves focusing your imagination to create calm, peaceful images in your mind, thereby providing a "mental escape." Guided imagery provides a powerful psychological strategy that enhances a person’s coping skills.

There are different ways to practice using guided imagery. These can include taking a class where you are "guided" by an instructor, using audio recordings, or simply using your own imagination. It has been shown to provide significant stress reduction benefits, manage anxiety and depression, reduce fatigue and improve quality of life.

Internet link: http://alabamainstituteformindfulness.com/index.html

Local Access: The Alabama Institute for Mindfulness was founded in 2015 by Leila Nabors and Beth Cook, Licensed Professional Counselors and Psychotherapists who have been in practice for over a decade. They are based in Huntsville, AL and offer programs such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), an eight-week intensive, psychoeducational program and a Monthly Drop-In Meditation Group that practices meditation and guided imagery and explores some aspect of mindfulness. The Monthly Drop-In Meditation Group takes place on the first Sunday of each month at the Crestwood Medical Center Women's Center and is free of charge.
Hypnosis

Hypnosis is a type of mind body therapy. Hypnosis involves entering a deeply relaxed state during which you receive positive suggestions from a therapist. The therapist induces a relaxed state where you are still aware of what is happening. The therapist can then give you various suggestions to help manage your symptoms.

Studies have shown that hypnosis can help with a variety of cancer related symptoms such as anxiety, fatigue, and depression. However, it does not work for everyone. Some people can enter a hypnotic state more easily or accept suggestions more readily. Adverse reactions to hypnosis are rare, and can include dizziness, headache, anxiety, and the creation of false memories. It is important to have hypnosis done by a trained professional.

Internet link: https://www.centerforinnerwellness.com/

Local Access: The Center for Inner Wellness located in Huntsville, AL is started by Becky Waters, a Certified Hypnotherapist, Professional Breathwork, EFT Practitioner, and Inner Wellness Life Coach/Spiritual Counselor. She uses methods such as Hypnotherapy, Emotional Freedom Technique, Matrix Reprinting, and Picture Tapping Technique in individual sessions, workshops, and classes to help manage conditions such as anxiety, stress, fear, pain management, and more. The first 20-minute consultation is free, and after that sessions generally range from one to two hours.
Massage therapy

Massage therapy works by targeting the muscles and soft tissues of the body. It can be defined as the systemic stimulation of the body's soft tissues manually or mechanically for therapeutic purposes in order to maintain blood and lymph circulation, relax muscles, relieve pain, ease muscle soreness and stiffness, reduce fatigue and promote sleep.

There are many studies demonstrating the benefits of massage as a complementary therapy in cancer patients. There are many types of massage, and you should consult with your doctor to see which types of massage are safe for your type of cancer.

Internet Link: http://www.huntsvillemassageprofessionals.com/home

Local Access: There are many massage therapists in the Madison, Limestone and Morgan area. Using the internet or phone book may help you find a massage therapist to meet your needs close to your home. For more information on the business provided in the link above, see reflexology
Reflexology

Reflexology is the application of pressure to areas on the feet (or the hands). Reflexology is generally relaxing and may help alleviate stress. Reflexology works on the theory that areas of the foot correspond to organs and systems of the body. Pressure applied to the foot is believed to bring relaxation and healing to the corresponding area of the body.

Several studies indicate that reflexology may reduce pain, fatigue, stress, and anxiety, and enhance relaxation and sleep. Reflexology is a safe practice and is unlikely to cause harmful effects as long as precautions are taken with patients who have medical conditions such as blood clot disorders or cancer. Given that reflexology is low risk, it can be a good option for managing fatigue and stress relief.

Internet link: http://www.huntsvillemassageprofessionals.com/home

Local Access: Huntsville Massage Professionals is a group of trained, professional, Licensed Massage Therapists in Alabama. Their therapists are state licensed and certified by the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork and specialize in a variety of different types of massage, including Swedish Relaxation Massage, Lymphatic Drainage Massage, Deep Tissue Massage, Reflexology, and more. You can request the therapist who best meets your individual therapeutic massage needs or create your own individualized massage package. They are available seven days a week by appointment only.
Medical Qigong (ch‘i kung)

Qigong is a type biofield therapy that consists of gentle exercise that aims improves one's mental and physical health by integrating movement, posture, breathing technique, self-massage, sound, and focused intent. Like other biofield therapies, qigong works by improving and balancing the patient’s qi, or life energy, to stimulate healing responses.

Clinical studies have shown that qigong can improve certain types of pain, fatigue, and quality of life. When done correctly, qigong is a safe and cost-effective practice. Risks involved with qigong are only those associated with any kind of physical activity and include minor aches and muscle strains. While there are many organizations that offer training and certification programs, there is no nationally regulated license for qigong. Ask a trusted source (such as your health care provider) to recommend a qi gong or tai chi (a martial art with similar movements and practices to qi gong) instructor for you and find out about the training and experience of any instructor you're considering.

Internet link: https://www.energyeclecticshealing.com/

Local Access: Energy Eclectics Healing is based in Nashville, Tennessee and started by Cyndi Clark, a Medical Qigong Therapist & Reiki Master/Teacher. She has practiced energy healing methods for over 20 years and her classes have been accepted by the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (NCBTMB). She offers weekly Qigong sessions as well as Reiki classes for those who wish to become practitioners.
Music therapy

Music Therapy is the clinical and evidence-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals with a certified professional who has completed an approved music therapy program. Music Therapy involves using music therapeutically to address physical, emotional, cognitive, and social needs of individuals. The music therapist assesses the strengths and needs of the client, then administers appropriate treatment which can include creating, singing, moving to, and listening to music.

Research in music therapy shows that it can be effective in treating many physical and psychological conditions and symptoms, such as aiding physical rehabilitation and facilitating movement, reducing fatigue, increasing motivation and quality of life, providing emotional support for clients and their families, and providing an outlet for expression of feelings.

Internet link: https://imageryandmusic.com/

Local Access: Healing Sounds Music Therapy in Huntsville was founded in 2009 by Stephanie Bolton, who has been a certified music therapist since 1997. She offers music therapy and The Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music (GIM) to help clients struggling with mental health issues, undergoing cancer treatments, or experiencing grief or loss. Healing Sounds also holds Therapeutic Drumming events and a Women’s Wellness Group.
Physical therapy

Physical therapy is the treatment of disease, injury, or deformity by physical methods such as exercise, massage, and heat treatment, and exercise. The overall goal is to maintain, restore, or improve your mobility and help reduce your pain. Physical therapy can help a patient regain movement or strength after an injury or illness and include variety of therapies can be applied to treat a range of conditions.

Many studies have shown that exercise during and after cancer treatment is effective in improving fitness, reducing fatigue, and enhancing quality of life. While exercise is something that can be performed in one’s home, doing so in a more professional setting and with the aid of physical therapists can more safely and effectively treat certain conditions associated with cancer and its treatments.

Internet link: https://www.starpt.com

Local Access: STAR Physical Therapy was established in 1997 and has over 60 clinics scattered throughout Tennessee. In addition to offering physical therapy programs such as occupational therapy, hand therapy, balance and vestibular therapy, some locations such as the STAR Physical Therapy clinic in Pulaski, Tennessee offer a specialized cancer program that helps cancer patients recover the endurance, function and strength that is often affected throughout cancer treatments.
Yoga

Yoga is a form of exercise that uses breathing techniques, exercise and meditation. It is an activity that helps to improve health and happiness by improving fitness, promoting relaxation and reducing stress. Yoga has been shown to be therapeutic for many physical and mental conditions. In the treatment of cancer fatigue, exercise is considered one of the safest and most effective interventions. A well-designed yoga program is a low impact alternative that can provide many of the same benefits as an exercise program, increasing general health and stamina, reducing stress, and improving those conditions brought about by sedentary lifestyles.

There are many different types of yoga, including Hatha yoga, Bikram yoga, and Restorative yoga. Risks generally include physical injuries as a result of some of the more strenuous postures. Some cancer types may cause conditions that can limit one’s physical abilities. Consult with your doctor to determine what types of yoga may be safe for you.

Internet link: http://www.yogacenterofhuntsville.com/

Local Access: The Yoga Center of Huntsville was founded 20 years ago. They have several certified instructors who specialize in many different styles of yoga including Hatha, Vinyasa, Restorative, and Iyengar method. They also offer Pilates classes and other workshops. Classes are available throughout the week and can be purchased walk-in or in bundles of 5 or 12 classes. Private classes for yoga and Pilates are also available. Other Yoga providers closer to you may be found using a simple internet search.
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Additional Reading Sources


Additional Websites

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American Cancer Society: https://www.cancer.org/


National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health: https://nccih.nih.gov/