Active Despite Pain: Patient Experiences With Guided Imagery With Relaxation Compared to Planned Rest

Mope T. Adeola, RN, CNS, OCN®, Carol L. Baird, PhD, RN, GCNS, Laura Prouty Sands, PhD, Nancy Longoria, PhD, LMFT-I, QMHP, Una Henry, PhD, Jacqueline Nielsen, MSN, RN, AOCN®, and Cleveland G. Shields, PhD

Inadequate pain control remains a threat to the quality of life of patients with cancer. Guided imagery with relaxation (GIR) is a mind-body therapy that has shown promise in reducing chronic pain. This article discusses a qualitative, descriptive study for which the objective was to compare the experiences of patients with cancer with reported pain using GIR compared to planned rest.

At a Glance
- Patients with cancer who report pain often have ongoing pain despite active pain management strategies.
- Patients with cancer often carry out many activities of daily living in the presence of cancer pain.
- Guided imagery with relaxation, which involves use of the imagination to create mental images to alter pain experiences, may reduce cancer pain.

Mind-Body Treatment

Mind-body therapies include an assortment of treatments, such as meditation, yoga, tai chi, biofeedback, progressive relaxation, hypnosis, and visual imagery. All mind-body therapies are based on the theory of interaction between the mind, brain, body, and behavior (Wahbeh, Elsas, & Oken, 2008). A common factor in these mind-body therapies is relaxation; however, mind-body therapies also require concentrated effort. Electroencephalography, magnetic resonance imaging, and positron-emission tomography tests show changes in cerebral and amygdala activity during guided imagery, indicating a direct physiologic effect of mind-body therapies (Munzer, Zentgraf, Stark, & Vaitl, 2008; Schienle, Schäfer, & Vaitl, 2008; Wagner et al., 2008).

Guided Imagery With Relaxation

GIR holds promise as a mind-body treatment for decreasing pain in patients with chronic pain (Baird & Sands, 2004; Mannix, Chandurkar, Rybicki, Tusek, &...