The Effects of P6 Acupressure and Nurse-Provided Counseling on Chemotherapy-Induced Nausea and Vomiting in Patients With Breast Cancer

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Of the symptoms of chemotherapy, chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting (CINV) is the most prevalent and one of the hardest to manage. Women with breast cancer often suffer from CINV because chemotherapy agents for breast cancer combine various emetogenic agents, such as cyclophosphamide, doxorubicin, epirubicin, paclitaxel, docetaxel, fluorouracil, and methotrexate (Bender et al., 2002; Grunberg, 2007; Newton, Hickey, & Marrs, 2009). More than half of women undergoing chemotherapy have been reported to experience CINV despite the use of antiemetic medications (Dibble, Israel, Nussey, Casey, & Luce, 2003; Lee, Dibble, Pickett, & Luce, 2005; Williams & Schreier, 2004).

The Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) Putting Evidence Into Practice guidelines on CINV management list acupuncture, acupressure, guided imagery, music therapy, progressive muscle relaxation, and psychoeducational support and information as likely to be effective nonpharmacologic interventions (Tipton et al., 2007). Among those interventions, acupressure and counseling provided by a nurse can be useful interventions in nursing practice because they are noninvasive, easy to apply, and can be led by nurses. Evidence supporting those modalities, however, is scarce and inconsistent.

Only three randomized, controlled trials (RCTs) have examined the effects of pericardium 6 (P6) acupressure on CINV management (Dibble et al., 2007; Molassiotis, Helin, Dabbour, & Hummerston, 2007; Roscoe et al., 2003). The P6 point is called “Neiguan” in traditional Eastern medicine and is known to be associated with nausea and vomiting. By pressing the point, the energy, which is called Qi, is believed to flow easily and reduce nausea and vomiting (Filshie & White, 1998; Gach, 1990). The P6 point is located on the anterior surface of both forearms, about three finger widths up from the wrist crease (Klein & Griffiths, 2004). The studies investigated mostly women with breast cancer, and used the P6 point.