Psychoneuroimmunology
Part II: Mind-Body Interventions

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Integrative therapies, commonly referred to as complementary and alternative medicine (CAM), are becoming increasingly popular. Oncology nurses are becoming more mindful of patients’ interest in and use of CAM, while also recognizing the value of incorporating such interventions into patient care. Inherent to many integrative therapies is the notion of holism and the connection between mind, body, and spirit. The scientific field of psychoneuroimmunology (PNI) provides an explanation of why mind-body therapies can improve psychological and physical functioning, quality of life, and perhaps disease-related outcomes.

This article is the second part of a two-part series about PNI. The first article, which was published in the May/June issue of the Clinical Journal of Oncology Nursing, provided a detailed overview of the physiology of PNI. This installment will focus on various integrative therapies that are based on the principles of PNI. It will discuss four general categories of mind-body interventions: sensory, cognitive, expressive, and physical (see Figure 1). In addition, examples of therapies that overlap categories will be provided, as well as a discussion of the limitations associated with the PNI framework.

Sensory Interventions

Of all the different kinds of integrative therapies, sensory interventions represent the most natural fit with nursing practice and are the easiest to incorporate into everyday patient care. The therapeutic value of sensory interventions is illuminated through understanding basic neuroscience and PNI. Stimulation of the five major senses triggers an understanding basic neuroscience and PNI. Stimulation of the five major senses triggers.

Physical exercise
Dance
Tai chi
Progressive muscle relaxation

Sensory
Smell (e.g., aromatherapy)
Sight (e.g., colors, visual images)
Taste (e.g., favorite foods)
Hearing (e.g., music, sounds of nature, calming or uplifting words or voices)
Touch (e.g., massage of the back, feet, hands, scalp)

Cognitive
Meditation
Guided imagery
Visualization
Hypnosis
Autogenic training
Humor
Cognitive restructuring and reframing

Expressive
Expressive writing, journaling
Art therapy (e.g., drama, creativity)
Music therapy (e.g., singing, playing an instrument, composing)
Support groups, counseling, and psychotherapy

References

Digital Object Identifier: 10.1188/02.CJON.243-246