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ROLE OF THERAPEUTIC TOUCH IN THE MANAGEMENT OF RESPONSIVE BEHAVIOR IN PATIENTS WITH DEMENTIA.

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Introduction: There was an estimated 36.5 million individuals worldwide living with dementia in 2010 as per World Health Organization. In addition to deficits in cognitive domains, Responsive Behaviours in Dementia (RBD) greatly impact the quality-of-life of individuals with dementia and greatly increase caregiver burden.

Current treatment modalities are not always effective, and thus non-pharmacological approaches along with careful use of pharmacological therapies should be considered in the management of RBD. Therapeutic Touch (TT) is a simple procedure that only requires a pair of hands and a compassionate mind. TT allows for clear and respectful communication with the patient and helps to avoid confrontation by providing stimulation and structure.

Objective: To review the publications that evaluate the use of TT in the management of RBD.

Methods: We searched PubMed for ‘Therapeutic Touch’ and ‘Dementia’. We limited our inclusion to reviews and studies published in the last 10 years. We excluded articles in languages other than English and studies for which no outcomes were reported.

Results: Four of the five examined studies suggest that Therapeutic Touch reduces restless behaviours found in dementia. However, there are limitations to these studies including methodological variability and small sample sizes.

Conclusions: TT is garnering attention for its potential role in ameliorating RBD in patients suffering from different stages of dementia and many are looking into using TT in palliative care settings. It can be used in inpatient and outpatient settings. However, at this time, there is insufficient data and further studies need to be done before definite conclusions can be drawn.

Biography

Shaira Wignarajah is a fourth year student at York University who is currently pursuing a Kinesiology degree. Shaira has a strong desire and interest to study medicine. For the past 3 years, she has been actively involved in research at the Baycrest Health Sciences System, working together with the team on topics related to geriatrics, palliative and end-of-life care, and ethics and law in medicine. Shaira has a strong interest in writing and participating in editing manuscripts which have been accepted nationally and internationally, and her contribution has been acknowledged. She is a co-author of the recently published study on the role of Therapeutic Touch in Geriatric Palliative care. She also appeared in the Media as a co-author of an article on the crucial role of Advance Care Planning. She is very motivated towards her own progress and plans to be involved in medical education to improve the quality of patient care in the future.

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