



Use of integrative and complementary practices in cancer patients and the role of the pharmaceutical professional

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ABSTRACT

Cancer is a pathology in which there is a disordered growth of cells, which tend to invade neighboring organs and tissues. It is considered a public health problem, being among the four leading causes of premature death in the world, and although the health area has advanced, there are stigmas related to the disease that make the patient have difficulties in performing the treatment. The combinations of chemotherapeutic drugs used have high cure rates and improved survival curves, but generate numerous side effects because they are not selective and also affect healthy cells, interfering with the patient's quality of life (QOL). During this time of so many uncertainties, patients need to receive adequate care, in a multidisciplinary way, that values their QOL. Thus, Integrative and Complementary Practices (ICPs) can be used together with conventional treatment, helping to reduce side effects and the consumption of supportive drugs, also reducing adverse reactions. In addition, the care of the pharmaceutical professional with the multidisciplinary team is a fundamental strategy to ensure the success of the therapy and improve the patient's QoL. In this context, we sought to evaluate the use of PICS in improving the quality of life of cancer patients, identifying which are the most used PICS and in which physical and psychological symptoms they act, also demonstrating the importance of the pharmaceutical professional in monitoring the cancer patient using PICS. The study is characterized by a literature review, for the development searches were carried out in scientific articles by electronic means, in the databases that make up the Virtual Health Library (VHL). The search was performed using the keywords: neoplasms, complementary therapies, quality of life and pharmaceutical care. The review aimed to answer the guiding question: What are the benefits of Integrative and Complementary Practices for improving the quality of life of cancer patients, and what is the role of the pharmaceutical professional in this area? The selected studies were open access, in the form of full text, in Portuguese, online and available in full, aligned with the study theme. Regarding the most used ICPs by cancer patients, the data found brought acupuncture as the most present practice, cited in six of the total of fifteen studies evaluated when crossing the descriptors "complementary therapies" and "neoplasms". Also, the practices of herbal medicine, homeopathy and massage therapy were cited in four studies; relaxation with guided visualization and reiki in three studies; meditation, yoga and medicinal plants in two studies; and auriculotherapy, *qi-gong* medicinal, flower therapy, reflexology and music therapy in only one study. When analyzing the data, it is also possible to notice the patients' little knowledge regarding these practices, which may be a consequence of the insufficient supply in hospitals and health units, in addition to the knowledge on the part of health professionals, which is limited. As for the physical and psychological symptoms involved in the use of PICS, nausea and vomiting were the most prevalent effects, being responsible for the abandonment or delay in treatment. In view of this symptom, the practice of acupuncture proved to be beneficial in improving quality of life and reducing the use of antiemetics such as ondansetron. The practice, when compared to the drug in the prevention of nausea and vomiting induced by chemotherapy, showed a more significant response, representing 52.8% in the group that used acupuncture and 35.7% in the one that used the drug. In addition, there



was a decrease in the use of symptomatic medications, being more significant in non-opioid analgesics used by a group of patients treated with different complementary practices. The use decreased by a total of 6.25 tablets per each for each patient in six weeks of follow-up. In addition, the benefits of other practices stand out, music therapy proved to be effective in reducing fatigue, massage therapy brought a reduction in side effects, and reiki provided a reduction in pain, nausea and vomiting, promoting relaxation, spiritual uplift, improved sleep and increased functional capacity. The effectiveness of auriculotherapy has also been proven, treating symptoms such as pain, constipation, nausea and vomiting, hot flushes, dyspnea, fatigue and insomnia. Another factor that reduces fatigue, present in 50 to 90% of patients, is the practice of physical exercises, which even if not characterized as an ICP is an effective action, bringing benefits such as improved oxygen consumption, body composition, reduced costs with chemotherapy, hospitalization, absence from work and sleep quality. Regarding the pharmaceutical professional in the follow-up of cancer patients using ICPs, it is essential to consider the complexity of the disease and that the health team is prepared to meet the demands required, in a comprehensive and multiprofessional way. It is known that patients with neoplasms are candidates to discontinue treatment, since they require changes in lifestyle, however, it has been shown that the pharmacist's approach to the patient improved adherence to pharmacotherapy and consequently improved therapeutic outcomes. Factors such as lack of information about the disease and not understanding how to use the medication were pointed out as reasons for non-adherence. In addition, it was possible to reduce problems related to the use of medicines through pharmaceutical intervention, reinforcing once again the importance of the professional. In the multiprofessional team, the pharmacist's work, in addition to selecting and handling drugs, promoting safe and effective pharmacotherapy, also includes the management of side effects such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, mucositis and alopecia. From the data analyzed, it can be concluded that cancer is a pathology that demands care and that generates damage to patients, the side effects and negative feelings when obtaining the diagnosis impact on the quality of life of the individual, who, being dissatisfied with the imposed model, seeks PICS. These stand out for treating the mind and body, being effective in mitigating side effects, allowing a better quality of life during and after treatment. It is evident the importance of a trained team to better serve the patient. It is emphasized that it is necessary to redefine the models of health care and revolutionize the way of thinking the practice of the professional, in order to make the patient the protagonist of the process of his care.



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