

Study shows integrative medicine relieves pain and anxiety for cancer inpatients

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Pain is a common symptom of cancer and side effect of cancer treatment, and treating cancer-related pain is often a challenge for health care providers.

The Penny George Institute for Health and Healing researchers found that [integrative medicine](#) therapies can substantially decrease pain and anxiety for hospitalized [cancer patients](#). Their findings are published in the current issue of the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute Monographs*.

"Following Integrative medicine interventions, such as medical massage, acupuncture, guided imagery or relaxation response intervention, [cancer](#) patients experienced a reduction in pain by an average of 47 percent and anxiety by 56 percent," said Jill Johnson, Ph.D., M.P.H., lead author and Senior Scientific Advisor at the Penny George Institute.

"The size of these reductions is clinically important, because theoretically, these therapies can be as effective as medications, which is the next step of our research," said Jeffery Dusek, Ph.D., senior author and Research Director for the Penny George Institute.

The Penny George Institute receives funding from the National Center of Alternative and Complementary Medicine of the National Institutes of Health to study the impact of integrative therapies on pain over many hours as well as over the course of a patient's entire hospital stay.

"The overall goal of this research is to determine how integrative services can be used with or instead of narcotic medications to control pain," Johnson said.

Researchers looked at [electronic medical records](#) from admissions at Abbott Northwestern Hospital between July 1, 2009 and December 31, 2012. From more than ten thousand admissions, researchers identified 1,833 in which cancer patients received integrative medicine services.

Patients were asked to report their pain and anxiety before and just after the integrative medicine intervention, which averaged 30 minutes in duration.

Patients being treated for lung, bronchus, and trachea cancers showed the largest percentage decrease in [pain](#) (51 percent). Patients with prostate cancer reported the largest percentage decrease in anxiety (64 percent).

More information: Effects of Integrative Medicine on Pain and Anxiety Among Oncology Inpatients, *J Natl Cancer Inst Monogr* (2014) 2014 (50): 330-337. [DOI: 10.1093/jncimonographs/lgu030](https://doi.org/10.1093/jncimonographs/lgu030)

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