

Effects of complementary therapies on clinical outcomes in patients being treated with radiation therapy for prostate cancer.

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Source

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Abstract

BACKGROUND:

This pilot randomized controlled trial (RCT) examined the clinical effects of 2 complementary (CAM) therapies, relaxation response therapy (RRT) and Reiki therapy, in men being treated with external beam radiotherapy (EBRx) for prostate cancer.

METHODS:

Study participants were randomly assigned to weekly RRT, Reiki therapy twice weekly, or wait-list control. Well-validated instruments measured anxiety (STAI), depression (CES-D), and quality of life in cancer patients (FACT-G) at randomization and 3 subsequent time points.

RESULTS:

Fifty-four men were randomized, and 16 of 18 (89%) of RRT and 15 of 18 (83%) of Reiki patients completed the intervention protocol. No statistically significant difference was found between the RRT, Reiki, and control groups on total scores for the STAI, CES-D, or FACT-G instruments at any time point. However, at the end of the intervention, significant improvement was found on the emotional well-being subscale of the FACT-G quality of life scale in the RRT group compared with the Reiki and control groups ($P = .01$). In participants who were classified as "anxious" at baseline, statistically significant improvement occurred in the RRT group ($P = .02$), and a positive trend was found in the Reiki group ($P = .10$).

CONCLUSIONS:

This pilot study documented the feasibility of conducting a RCT of CAM therapies in men undergoing EBRx for prostate cancer. Relaxation response therapy improved emotional well being and eased anxiety in participants. Reiki therapy also had a positive effect in anxious patients. A larger study to verify and better define the benefits of these therapies in men with prostate cancer is warranted.