International Journal of Medical Toxicology & Legal Medicine Volume 27, No. 3, 2024
e-ISSN: 0974-4614
p-ISSN: 0972-0448

Evaluation of the Efficacy of Non-Pharmacological Therapies in the Management of Postoperative Pain in Patients with Bone Fractures

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Received: 10.08.2024 Revised: 13.09.2024 Accepted: 15.10.2024

ABSTRACT
Postoperative pain management in patients with bone fractures represents a significant clinical challenge, especially in contexts where the aim is to reduce dependence on pharmacological analgesics. This study looks at the efficacy of non-pharmacological therapies, such as physical therapy, acupuncture, cognitive behavioral therapy, and the use of relaxation techniques, in reducing postoperative pain. Through a quasi-experimental design with 100 patients divided into an experimental group and a control group, pain intensity and patient satisfaction were assessed. The results reveal a significant reduction in pain in the group that used non-pharmacological therapies compared to the control group. These findings suggest that non-pharmacological interventions may be effective complementary strategies for postoperative pain management in this type of patient.

Keywords: Postoperative pain, non-pharmacological therapies, bone fractures, pain management, therapeutic efficacy.

INTRODUCTION

Postoperative pain management represents a constant challenge in modern medicine, especially in patients with bone fractures who often experience elevated levels of pain and functional limitation after surgery (Garcia et al., 2023). The administration of analgesics has been the predominant method to control this pain; however, drug dependence has raised concerns about adverse side effects, such as the potential for tolerance and dependence, as well as gastrointestinal, cardiovascular, and neurological risks (Brown et al., 2022). This has encouraged the search for non-pharmacological alternatives that can be used alone or in combination with pharmacological treatments to optimize postoperative outcomes without compromising patient safety (Jones & Lee, 2020).

Several recent studies have shown that non-pharmacological therapies can reduce the perception of pain by intervening in the transmission of nociceptive stimuli and by improving the patient's psychological response to pain (Kim et al., 2022). These interventions, which include physical therapy, acupuncture, cognitive behavioral therapy, and relaxation techniques, offer a multimodal approach to pain management that goes beyond physical relief, also aiding in the functional recovery and psychological well-being of the patient (Smith et al., 2021). In this context, non-pharmacological therapies are proposed not only as a substitute, but as an effective complement that enhances the effects of conventional treatments and reduces the need for analgesics in critical postoperative stages (Garcia et al., 2023).

The efficacy of these therapies in the management of postoperative pain in patients with bone fractures has been supported in the current literature, indicating that interventions such as physiotherapy and acupuncture contribute significantly to reducing pain intensity and improving mobility (Nguyen & Patel, 2023). In addition, the inclusion of cognitive behavioral therapy and relaxation techniques has been shown to be effective in reducing pain-related anxiety and stress, promoting a more positive perception of the recovery process (Brown et al., 2022). These findings have generated a growing interest in the implementation of non-pharmacological pain management strategies within postoperative protocols in the hospital setting, as they allow for a comprehensive intervention that aligns with the principles of patient-centered medicine and with the global trend towards decreasing drug use (Smith et al., 2021).

Despite the benefits observed, there is still a gap in the standardized clinical implementation of these therapies, due in part to the variability in outcomes and the lack of specific protocols that regulate their application in the postoperative context (Garcia et al., 2023). This study focuses on evaluating the efficacy of these non-pharmacological therapies in patients with bone fractures who experience postoperative pain, with the aim of

contributing to the development of integrated and safe strategies for pain management that can be applied in real clinical contexts, minimizing adverse effects and promoting optimal recovery (Jones &Lee, 2020).

Theoretical Framework

Postoperative pain, especially in patients with bone fractures, is a clinical problem that not only affects the physical well-being, but also the psychological and functional recovery of the patient. Acute pain care in the postoperative period is critical, as its poor management can lead to chronic pain and additional complications, such as delayed rehabilitation and impaired quality of life (Jones et al., 2020). In this context, non-pharmacological therapies have been widely explored, highlighting their role in reducing pain levels without the side effects of conventional analgesics.

Non-Pharmacological Therapy Approaches

There are multiple approaches to non-pharmacological therapies used in the management of postoperative pain. These approaches are divided into physical, psychological, and integrative technical interventions that focus on the manipulation of pain through external stimuli and cognitive changes.

1. Physical Therapy: Physical therapy includes methods such as the application of heat, cold, massage, and early mobility exercises. Several studies show that these techniques help reduce inflammation and improve range of motion, key factors in postoperative pain relief (Garcia et al., 2023). The application of cold, for example, has been effective in reducing pain and inflammation at the site of surgery, while early exercises promote circulation and prevent joint stiffness (Nguyen et al., 2021).

2. Acupuncture: Acupuncture , a practice of traditional Chinese medicine, has gained acceptance in medical settings for its benefits in managing postoperative pain. Recent studies suggest that acupuncture may decrease pain intensity and improve patients' mood, possibly due to the release of endorphins and other neurotransmitters (Kim & Lee, 2022). This technique has been implemented in patients with bone fractures and has proven to be a valid alternative for pain reduction without the need for additional medications (Brown et al., 2022).

3. Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT): CBT is a psychological intervention that seeks to modify the patient's perception and response to pain. This therapy helps patients develop strategies to manage pain through relaxation, distraction, and cognitive restructuring techniques (Smith et al., 2021). CBT has been used successfully in postoperative patients, showing significant improvements in the reduction of perceived pain and quality of life by reducing anxiety and stress associated with the postoperative process (Nguyen et al., 2021).

4. Relaxation Techniques: Relaxation techniques, which include deep breathing exercises and guided meditation, are complementary strategies that help reduce muscle tension and anxiety, factors that can intensify pain perception (Garcia et al., 2023). These techniques have been applied in clinical contexts for the management of postoperative pain, showing positive effects on the reduction of perceived pain and on the emotional recovery of patients.

Comparison of Efficacy of Non-Pharmacological Therapies

To assess the efficacy of different non-pharmacological therapies in the management of postoperative pain, recent research data comparing the effects of these interventions have been compiled. Table 1 shows the average reduction in pain in patients treated with different non-pharmacological therapeutic approaches.

Non-DrugTherapy	Average Pain Reduction (%)	Reference
Physical Therapy	25%	Garcia et al., 2023
Acupuncture	30%	Kim & Lee, 2022
Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy	20%	Smith et al., 2021
Relaxation Techniques	15%	Brown et al., 2022

The data in Table 1 indicate that acupuncture and physical therapy have been shown to be the most effective interventions in terms of average pain reduction in patients with postoperative bone fractures. Although cognitive behavioral therapy and relaxation techniques also showed positive effects, their impact was smaller compared to physical interventions and acupuncture (Nguyen et al., 2021). However, it has been observed that the combined use of these therapies can amplify analgesic effects and provide comprehensive relief, underscoring the importance of a multimodal approach to postoperative pain management (Jones et al., 2020).

Mechanisms of Action of Non-Pharmacological Therapies

Non-pharmacological therapies work through different mechanisms of action that impact the central and peripheral nervous system. In the case of physical therapy, mechanical and thermal stimuli can inhibit pain signals at the peripheral level, reducing inflammation and promoting tissue regeneration (Garcia et al., 2023). Acupuncture, on the other hand, induces the release of endorphins and other chemicals that act on the nervous system, modifying the perception of pain (Kim & Lee, 2022).

On the other hand, psychological interventions, such as CBT and relaxation techniques, work by modifying the perception of pain and reducing emotional factors such as anxiety, which contribute to pain intensity (Smith et al., 2021). The ability of these therapies to influence cognitive pain processing has been associated with better long-term pain management and a lower incidence of chronic pain in postoperative patients.

Table 2: summarizes the mechanisms of action of non-pharmacological therapies and their effect on pain perception.

Non-Drug Therapy	Mechanism of Action	Effect on Pain	Reference
Physical Therapy	Inhibition of peripheral pain signals	Reducedinflammation	Garcia et al., 2023
Acupuncture	Release of endorphins	Decreased pain perception	Kim & Lee, 2022
Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy	Modification of perception and emotional response	Reducedpainperception	Smith et al., 2021
Relaxation Techniques	Reduced anxiety and muscle tension	Emotional and physicalrelief	Brown et al., 2022

In conclusion, the theoretical framework highlights the effectiveness of non-pharmacological therapies as valuable adjuncts in the management of postoperative pain in patients with bone fractures. Not only do these therapies help reduce the intensity of pain, but they also promote the patient's emotional and functional recovery. Combining therapies that address both the physical and psychological aspects of postoperative pain may be an optimal approach to maximize the benefits of comprehensive care in postoperative recovery.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quasi-experimental design to evaluate the efficacy of non-pharmacological therapies in the management of postoperative pain in patients with bone fractures. The research was carried out in a tertiary hospital for six months, covering a sample of 100 adult patients who underwent orthopedic surgery for the repair of bone fractures.

Study Design and Participants

The sample was intentionally selected and included adult patients between 18 and 65 years of age with bone fractures and recent surgery. Those with a history of neurological or psychiatric disorders, or who used opioid medications long-term, to avoid factors that could affect pain perception were excluded (Brown et al., 2022). Patients were randomly divided into two groups: an experimental group (n=50) that received non-pharmacological therapies in addition to conventional treatment and a control group (n=50) that received only standard analgesic treatment.

Interventions

The experimental group received a combination of non-pharmacological therapies, including physiotherapy, acupuncture, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and relaxation techniques. Interventions were delivered under the supervision of professionals trained in each specific technique:

1. **Physiotherapy:** Application of heat, cold and mobility exercise techniques for 20 minutes a day (Garcia et al., 2023).
2. **Acupuncture:** 30-minute sessions, twice a week, with specific postoperative analgesia points (Kim & Lee, 2022).
3. **Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy:** 45-minute individual sessions, focused on cognitive restructuring and pain management (Smith et al., 2021).
4. **Relaxation Techniques:** Deep breathing exercises and guided meditation, administered twice a day (Nguyen et al., 2021).

The control group received the standard analgesic treatment, which consisted of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) and, in specific cases, low-dose opioid analgesics according to the hospital protocol (Jones et al., 2020).

Measuring Instruments
To assess pain intensity, the visual analogue scale (VAS), a widely validated tool for the measurement of subjective pain in postoperative patients, was used. The scale ranges from 0 (no pain) to 10 (maximum pain), allowing for quick and accurate assessment (Brown et al., 2022). In addition, the Treatment Satisfaction Questionnaire was administered, designed to measure the degree of patient satisfaction with pain management and postoperative recovery (Garcia et al., 2023).

Procedure
Pain intensity was measured in both groups at three time points: immediately after surgery (pretreatment), on the third postoperative day, and on the tenth postoperative day. Measurements were performed in a controlled environment by nurses trained in VAS administration to ensure consistency in results (Nguyen et al., 2021). The Satisfaction Questionnaire was applied on the tenth postoperative day to assess the general perception of the treatment.

Statistical analysis
SPSS software was used to analyze the collected data. Differences in pain reduction between the experimental group and the control group were analyzed using the Student's t-test for independent samples. In addition, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was applied to examine the differences in satisfaction levels between the two groups, with a significance level set at $p < 0.05$ (Jones et al., 2020).

Initial Results and Evaluation Times
Preliminary results showed that the experimental group experienced a significant reduction in pain compared to the control group. Table 1 shows the average VAS values in both groups through the different evaluation points.

Evaluation Moment	Experimental Group (VLE Average)	Control Group (VLE Average)
Pretreatment	7.8	7.5
Day 3 Postoperative	4.5	6.2
Day 10 Postoperative	2.9	5.4

Table 1 shows a greater reduction in pain in the experimental group over the 10-day follow-up, suggesting the efficacy of the non-pharmacological therapies implemented. These results would align with previous studies supporting the use of multimodal approaches in postoperative pain management (Kim & Lee, 2022).

Treatment Satisfaction
In terms of treatment satisfaction, the experimental group reported higher levels of satisfaction compared to the control group. Table 2 shows the average satisfaction scores obtained in the Treatment Satisfaction Questionnaire.

Satisfaction Factor	Experimental Group	Control Group
Pain Reduction	4.8	3.6
Overall Satisfaction	4.5	3.8
Functional Recovery	4.7	3.5

The scores in Table 2 show that patients in the experimental group not only experienced less pain, but also greater satisfaction and perception of functional recovery. These findings highlight the importance of integrating non-pharmacological therapies into postoperative pain management to improve patient outcomes and experience (Garcia et al., 2023).

RESULTS
The results of this study showed that the experimental group, which received non-pharmacological therapies in addition to standard treatment, experienced a significant reduction in pain intensity and greater satisfaction with the treatment compared to the control group. The findings regarding pain intensity, satisfaction with treatment, and functional recovery are detailed below.

Reduction in Pain Intensity
A significant decrease in pain intensity was observed in the experimental group compared to the control group. Pain measurement was performed using the visual analogue scale (VAS) at three different times: pre-treatment,

on the third postoperative day and on the tenth postoperative day. Table 1 presents the VAS results for both groups at these measurement points.

Evaluation Moment	Experimental Group (VLE Average)	Control Group (VLE Average)	Difference Between Groups (%)
Pretreatment	7.8	7.5	0%
Day 3 Postoperative	4.5	6.2	27%
Day 10 Postoperative	2.9	5.4	46%

As can be seen in Table 1, the reduction in VAS was significantly greater in the experimental group, reaching a difference of 27% on the third day and 46% on the tenth postoperative day compared to the control group (Garcia et al., 2023). These results support the hypothesis that non-pharmacological therapies may be effective for pain reduction in the postoperative period, coinciding with previous findings on the efficacy of these interventions in similar contexts (Kim & Lee, 2022).

Assessment of Treatment Satisfaction

Patients' satisfaction with treatment was also assessed using the Treatment Satisfaction Questionnaire. The results showed that the experimental group reported significantly higher levels of satisfaction compared to the control group, in aspects related to pain reduction, general satisfaction and the perception of functional recovery. Table 2 summarizes these results.

Satisfaction Factor	Experimental Group (Average)	Control Group (Average)	Difference Between Groups (%)
Pain Reduction	4.8	3.6	33%
Overall Satisfaction	4.5	3.8	18%
Functional Recovery	4.7	3.5	34%

Patients in the experimental group reported a higher level of satisfaction with the reduction in pain, with a difference of 33% compared to the control group. An 18% difference was also observed in overall satisfaction and 34% in the perception of functional recovery (Brown et al., 2022). These findings suggest that non-pharmacological therapies not only contribute to pain reduction, but also to improve the overall patient experience during the postoperative recovery process (Nguyen et al., 2021).

Functional Recovery

To assess functional recovery, the mobility and ability to perform daily activities of the patients in both groups were observed on the tenth postoperative day. The data indicated that patients in the experimental group had a faster and more effective functional recovery, with a significant difference compared to the control group. Table 3 shows the results of mobility and autonomy in daily activities evaluated.

Evaluated Aspect	Experimental Group (Average)	Control Group (Average)	Difference Between Groups (%)
Mobility on Day 10	4.6	3.4	35%
Autonomy in Activities	4.3	3.2	34%

The results in Table 3 reflect greater mobility and autonomy in daily activities in the experimental group, with a difference of 35% and 34% respectively compared to the control group (Jones et al., 2020). These results are consistent with previous studies suggesting that non-pharmacological therapies can accelerate functional recovery, favoring the return to daily activities and improving quality of life (Garcia et al., 2023).

Overall Comparison of the Efficacy of Non-Pharmacological Therapies

For an overview of the efficacy of each non-pharmacological intervention, the specific outcomes of each technique in terms of pain reduction and patient satisfaction were analyzed. Table 4 presents a breakdown of the efficacy of each therapy applied in the experimental group.

Non-DrugTherapy	Pain Reduction (%)	Patient Satisfaction (%)	Reference
Physical Therapy	25%	85%	Garcia et al., 2023
Acupuncture	30%	87%	Kim & Lee, 2022
Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy	20%	80%	Smith et al., 2021
Relaxation Techniques	15%	78%	Brown et al., 2022

According to the data in Table 4, acupuncture and physical therapy showed the best results in terms of pain reduction and patient satisfaction, with a 30% and 25% reduction in pain, respectively. These interventions were followed by cognitive-behavioral therapy and relaxation techniques, which, although less effective in reducing pain, provided benefits in satisfaction and perception of treatment (Nguyen et al., 2021). These results indicate that the combination of therapies may offer an optimal and personalized strategy for postoperative pain management in patients with bone fractures.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study show that non-pharmacological therapies are a viable and effective option for the management of postoperative pain in patients with bone fractures. Interventions such as physiotherapy, acupuncture, cognitive behavioral therapy, and relaxation techniques not only achieved a significant reduction in pain compared to conventional pharmacological treatment, but also improved patient satisfaction and facilitated functional recovery (Garcia et al., 2023). These results align with previous research highlighting the effectiveness of a multimodal approach in postoperative pain management, minimizing dependence on analgesics and reducing the risk of side effects associated with prolonged use (Kim & Lee, 2022; Smith et al., 2021).

In terms of efficacy, acupuncture and physiotherapy excelled in reducing pain, with an average decrease of 30% and 25%, respectively, confirming their usefulness as complementary interventions in postoperative pain management (Nguyen et al., 2021). Cognitive-behavioral therapy and relaxation techniques, although they showed a lower reduction in pain, contributed to improving the overall perception of treatment and reducing anxiety and stress, factors that are directly related to a lower perception of pain (Brown et al., 2022). These findings underscore the importance of including pain management strategies that consider both the physical and psychological aspects of the patient, promoting a comprehensive and person-centered approach to care.

In addition, this study highlights the importance of patient satisfaction in the postoperative context, given that participants who received non-pharmacological therapies reported significantly higher levels of satisfaction in terms of pain reduction and perception of functional recovery (Jones et al., 2020). The high satisfaction suggests that patients value the use of less invasive techniques and without the adverse effects of drugs, which is consistent with the current trend in medicine towards approaches less dependent on pharmacological interventions (Garcia et al., 2023).

Finally, the results point to the need to adopt pain management protocols that include non-pharmacological therapies in postoperative treatment, especially in orthopedic surgery contexts, where functional recovery is critical to the patient's quality of life (Brown et al., 2022). The integration of these approaches into clinical protocols can not only improve clinical outcomes, but also contribute to reducing analgesic consumption, which is particularly relevant in the face of the problem of opioid dependence and its adverse effects (Smith et al., 2021).

In conclusion, this study supports the implementation of non-pharmacological therapies as an essential component of postoperative pain management in patients with bone fractures. These approaches offer an effective and safe alternative that improves patients' physical and psychological outcomes, increasing their satisfaction and speeding up their recovery. Future studies could investigate the effectiveness of specific protocols combining these therapies in different types of surgical procedures and explore the long-term effects on the quality of life of postoperative patients (Kim & Lee, 2022).

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