ABSTRACT

Purpose: To determine the number of publications and their findings regarding intentional touch and healing on the human body, mind, and spirit.

Methods: A systematic review of appropriate databases was conducted following the prescribed criteria for the steps of the review process.

Results: A search located published articles relating to intentional touch and the effects on the body, mind, and spirit. Articles were analyzed and results of each article were summarized.

Conclusions: The systematic review revealed the number of publications regarding intentional touch and healing. It includes a compilation of the findings from the articles.

BACKGROUND

Intentional Touch: Terms used throughout history:
- Friction
- Rubbing
- Kneading
- Massage

Intentional touch, including massage therapy, is thought to be the oldest form of medical therapy. References regarding massage are found in Chinese medical texts more than 4,000 years old (Greene, 2015)

History of Intentional Touch in Nursing: (Ruffin 2011)
- 1860 – St. Thomas Hospital- Guided by Florence Nightingale, included massage instruction as part of nurses’ qualifications.
- 1882 – Anna Maxwell - One of the first instructors to give massage lessons to nursing pupils.
- 1907 – Isabel Robb – Included massage as a requirement during the second year of nurse training.
- 1941 – Kathryn L. Jensen-Nelson: Published Massage in Nursing Care, one of the last texts written on massage.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Through Our Union Comes Healing

Katherine Kolcaba’s nursing theory of comfort, describes comfort as existing in three forms:
- Relief
- Ease
- Transcendence

Holistic comfort is defined as the immediate experience of being strengthened through having the needs for relief, ease, and transcendence met in the physical, psycho-spiritual, social, and environmental (Kolcaba, 2010).

One might consider healing as a union between the mind, body, and spirit, aligning into a state of homeostasis. Intentional touch is one of the precursors to this butterfly effect.

METHODS

A systematic review of the literature was performed to identify articles related to intentional touch and the effects on the body, mind, and spirit. In the main data base search, two sets of search terms were applied and combined. The first set of search terms described the truncated list of nursing areas to choose from using NUR*. The second set of search terms were combined using the default AND. The search terms described in the second set were based on intentional touch and effects of intentional touch.

Inclusion Criteria:
- Articles published between 2005 and 2015
- Articles published in Academic Journals
- Articles related to nursing and intentional touch

Exclusion Criteria:
- All non-English language literature

DATA SOURCES

- CINAHL Plus with Full Text
- MEDLINE Complete
- COCHRAINE Database of Systematic Reviews

RESULTS

Of the 25 articles reviewed, 16 were chosen as examples where intentional touch has been utilized for efficacy in mental, physical, and spiritual issues.

SIGNIFICANCE TO NURSING

Touch is a natural part of nursing practice. Nurses use touch daily in health care settings through the assessment and care of their patients. Bringing intentional touch back into nursing practice will not only promote relaxation, sleep, and other positive outcomes already described, it will increase client satisfaction. This systematic review is phase one of a four phase project. The other three phases are as follows:

Phase II – Develop and Refine Tools. Define the “how” for intentional touch techniques.
Phase III – IRB, Pilot Studies
Phase IV – Educate and implement programs.

REFERENCES

References upon request
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