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Endocrinological evaluations of brief hand massages in palliative care

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES: Some patients with advanced cancer make use of complementary therapies for the reduction of anxiety and stress. These patients can suffer distressing end-of-life symptoms, which conventional treatments might not relieve satisfactorily. Although previous studies have suggested that complementary therapies could be useful for reducing distress in patients with cancer, it has remained unclear whether these benefits are applicable at the end-of-life stage. The current study examined to validate salivary chromogranin A (CgA) as a biomarker for relieving stress by hand massage in terminally ill patients.

METHODS: The study group comprised 34 inpatients in palliative care units. Each of these patients received a 5-minute massage to the upper extremity. Before and after the massage, saliva samples were collected in order to measure the CgA levels.

RESULTS: The brief hand massage appears to reduce levels of stress according to the salivary CgA ($p < 0.05$). In addition, we found statistically significant changes in patient satisfaction with hand massage.

CONCLUSIONS: Salivary CgA could potentially be used as a biomarker to measure relieving stress by hand massage in a palliative-care setting.