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NURSING INTERVENTION ON SIDE EFFECTS IN HEAD AND NECK
CANCER PATIENTS RECEIVING RADIOTHERAPY. THESIS ADVISOR:
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Carcinoma of head and neck ranks third among cancers found in Thai population and the incidence increases annually. At present, radiotherapy is one of the standard modes of treatment. However, radiotherapy produces physical and mental side effects. Therefore nursing is important to help patients minimize the side effects and to have a good quality of life.

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of integrated nursing intervention on side effects in head and neck cancer patients receiving radiotherapy. The subjects of the study were head and neck cancer patients who received the first course of radiotherapy at Siriraj Hospital, during March to June 2000. The study employed a quasi-experimental design. Forty head and neck cancer patients were selected and divided into two equal groups. The control group received normal nursing care and the experimental group received additional integrated nursing interventions. The intervention included teaching patients to eat the appropriate food, exercise by stretching the upper body for 5-10 minutes per day and listening to subliminal audio tape for 15 minutes per day. The subjects were assessed before, and 3-6 weeks after receiving radiotherapy by using the side effects of radiotherapy questionnaire. Data were obtained and computerized using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences for Windows (SPSS/FW). Frequency distribution was used to describe the demographic data. Mean and standard deviation were used to determine the score of side effects from radiotherapy and independent t-test was used to compare mean scores of side effects from radiotherapy. The threshold of statistical significance was set at 0.001.

The results showed that after receiving radiotherapy for 3 and 6 weeks the patients in the experimental group had lower scores of side effects from radiotherapy than those in the control group at a statistically significant level of 0.001.

The recommendation from this study is that the nursing care of head and neck cancer patients receiving radiotherapy should include integrated nursing intervention in addition to the normal nursing practice. Not only physical care but also mental support would be called for. Nurses must provide support, encourage and help the cancer patients throughout their treatment in order to prevent adverse side effects.