

Summary of doctoral dissertation

Purpose

The purpose of this study was twofold: to compare the severity of constipation and QOL for women with constipation and to determine the effectiveness of hot compresses for constipation and QOL, focus on taking laxatives or not.

Methods

Meeting the inclusion criteria were 120 women: (ages 20-39), (Constipation Assessment Scale; CAS ≥ 5). One group (n=60) had taken laxatives for constipation, and another group (n=60) had not. Each group of sixty women was randomly assigned to either the intervention (n=30) or control (n=30) group. The intervention group applied hot compresses to their lumbar region, for a duration of 5 hours everyday during intervention weeks. During the intervention, women recorded their daily defecation and completed the CAS, the CQ15 (Constipation QOL 15), SF36, and effects for food and clothing, and satisfaction about defecation. Data from the intergroup comparison and intragroup comparison were analyzed. Effects models were created using analysis of covariance structure. The Research Ethics Committees of St. Luke's College of Nursing approved this study(11-085).

Results

Women taking laxatives (TL) were 39 (intervention=21; control=18); not taking laxatives (NTL) were 50 (intervention=24; control=26). There were significant differences in QOL between the groups, TL and NTL. TL had a higher CQ15 overall; CQ15 Physical and Psychosocial were significant higher compared to NTL. The Vitality and Mental Health of SF36 were significant lower compared to NTL. Women who took laxatives had lower QOL scores than women not taking laxatives.

Significant improvement was seen in days of defecation and the number of defecation per week for the intervention group TL. Significant improvement was also seen in CQ15 physical scale for both intervention groups. CQ15 psychological, restriction of food selection and satisfaction of defecation were significantly improved in the intervention group TL. No statistically significant differences were found in the amount of laxatives used or cost. In the model of effects of hot compresses, there was a direct effect from hot compresses to defecation and mental health in TL, and to abdominal discomfort in NTL.

Conclusion

TL for constipation were severely self-conscious and their QOL was significant lower than NTL. Hot compresses was an effective intervention to improve constipation severity and QOL, especially for TL.