Treatment Preferences for CAM in Children with Chronic Pain

Original Article
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Abstract

CAM therapies have become increasingly popular in pediatric populations. Yet, little is known about children's preferences for CAM. This study examined treatment preferences in chronic pediatric pain patients offered a choice of CAM therapies for their pain.

Participants were 129 children (94 girls) (mean age = 14.5 years ± 2.4; range = 8–18 years) presenting at a multidisciplinary, tertiary clinic specializing in pediatric chronic pain. Bivariate and multivariate analyses were used to examine the relationships between CAM treatment preferences and patient's sociodemographic and clinical characteristics, as well as their self-reported level of functioning. Over 60% of patients elected to try at least one CAM approach for pain. The most popular CAM therapies were biofeedback, yoga and hypnosis; the least popular were art therapy and energy healing, with craniosacral, acupuncture and massage being intermediate.

Patients with a diagnosis of fibromyalgia (80%) were the most likely to try CAM versus those with other pain diagnoses. In multivariate analyses, pain duration emerged as a significant predictor of CAM preferences. For mind-based approaches (i.e. hypnosis, biofeedback and art therapy), pain duration and limitations in family activities were both significant predictors.

When given a choice of CAM therapies, this sample of children with chronic pain, irrespective of pain diagnosis, preferred non-invasive approaches that enhanced relaxation and increased somatic control. Longer duration of pain and greater impairment in functioning, particularly during family activities increased the likelihood that such patients agreed to engage in CAM treatments, especially those that were categorized as mind-based modalities.