

THE EFFECTS OF AN ORAL SELF-CARE PROGRAM ON SELF-CARE BEHAVIOR AND MUCOSITIS OF SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN WITH CANCER RECEIVING CHEMOTHERAPY

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Introduction: The most common mucosal infection in severe neutropenic patient is oral mucositis which occurs between and after the course of therapy. If oral mucositis severity could be controlled, it would lead to clear the infection, and improve quality of life.

Objectives: To examine the effects of an oral self-care program on self-care behavior and mucositis of school-age children with cancer receiving chemotherapy.

Methods: The samples were 30 children with cancer, who were admitted for chemotherapeutic regimens in the hospital. The 15 children with cancer in the experimental group and the others 15 children in the control group were purposively selected by these inclusion criteria: children with all types of cancer, ages between 6-12 years old, and no oral mucositis (severity score of 8). These two groups were matched-pair in according to age, type of cancer, type of chemotherapeutic regimens, and type of ward admission. The children with cancer in the control group received the usual oral care and in the experimental group participated in the oral self-care program. The oral self-care program included teaching and training in oral self-care skills. Data were collected by an oral self-care behavioral interview, an oral self-care behavioral observation, and an oral assessment record. Data were analyzed by using a dependent t-test, an ANCOVA with pretest oral self-care behavior scores as a covariate, and the Mann-Whitney U Test.

Results: The mean score of oral self-care behavior of children with cancer in the experimental group after an oral self-care program was significantly higher than before the oral self-care program ($p < .05$). The mean score of oral self-care behavior of children with cancer in the experimental group was significantly higher than the control group ($p < .05$), and the severity score of oral mucositis in the experimental group was significantly lower than the control group ($p = .03$).

Conclusion: Results showed that an oral self-care program can promote the oral self-care behavior in the aspect of both regularity and correctness. Furthermore, it could reduce the further severity of oral mucositis. These findings suggested that an oral self-care program should be used in nursing care to promote the oral

self-care behavior, and to reduce the further severity of oral mucositis in school-age children with cancer receiving chemotherapy.

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