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Aromatherapy: Using essential oils to decrease nausea and vomiting in patients in the acute care setting

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Background

Many patients experiencing nausea and vomiting present to the hospital for treatment. Also, during the course of their stay due to medications, their diseases process or treatments, they may experience nausea and vomiting. Many of these patients are prescribed anti-emetic medications that can have harmful or uncomfortable side effects such as drowsiness, dizziness or headache. These side effects can be mild and self-limited or prolonged and more debilitating. Regardless of the etiology, nausea and vomiting may be responsible for safety issues (falls), delayed discharges due to side effects, decreased patient satisfaction, increased costs and an increase in the workload of nursing staff (Steele, 2014).

Purpose

Currently there is limited research surrounding the use of aromatherapy to decrease nausea and vomiting. Studies support use of the essential oils ginger, peppermint, spearmint, and cardamom or a combination of these for post anesthesia nausea and vomiting. (Hunt, 2012)

Review of the literature suggest that inhaled vapor of essential oils not only reduced the incidence and severity of nausea and vomiting but also decreased antiemetic requirements (Lua, 2012)

PICOT: Does aromatherapy using essential oil of ginger decrease nausea and vomiting in the acute care setting for patients older than 21?

Methods

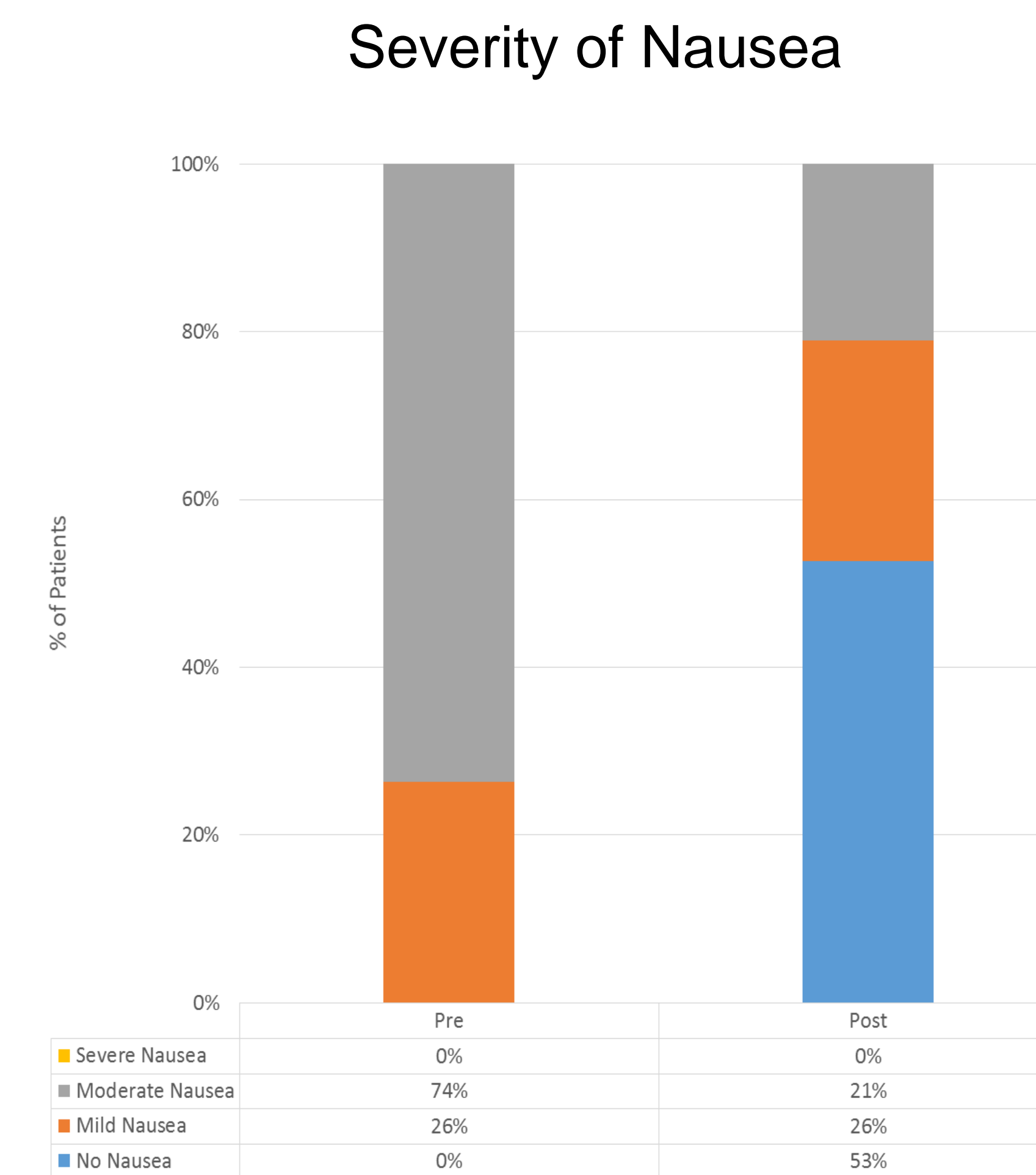
This is a prospective study for patients experiencing nausea and/or vomiting, who were over 21 years old, not pregnant, and without bleeding disorders. The study took place in the Clinical Decision Unit where the length of stay is typically less than 48 hours.

Participants were assessed for their degree of nausea using a Likert scale ranging from 0 (being no nausea) to 3 (severe nausea) prior to inhalation of ginger essential oil and 30 minutes post therapy.

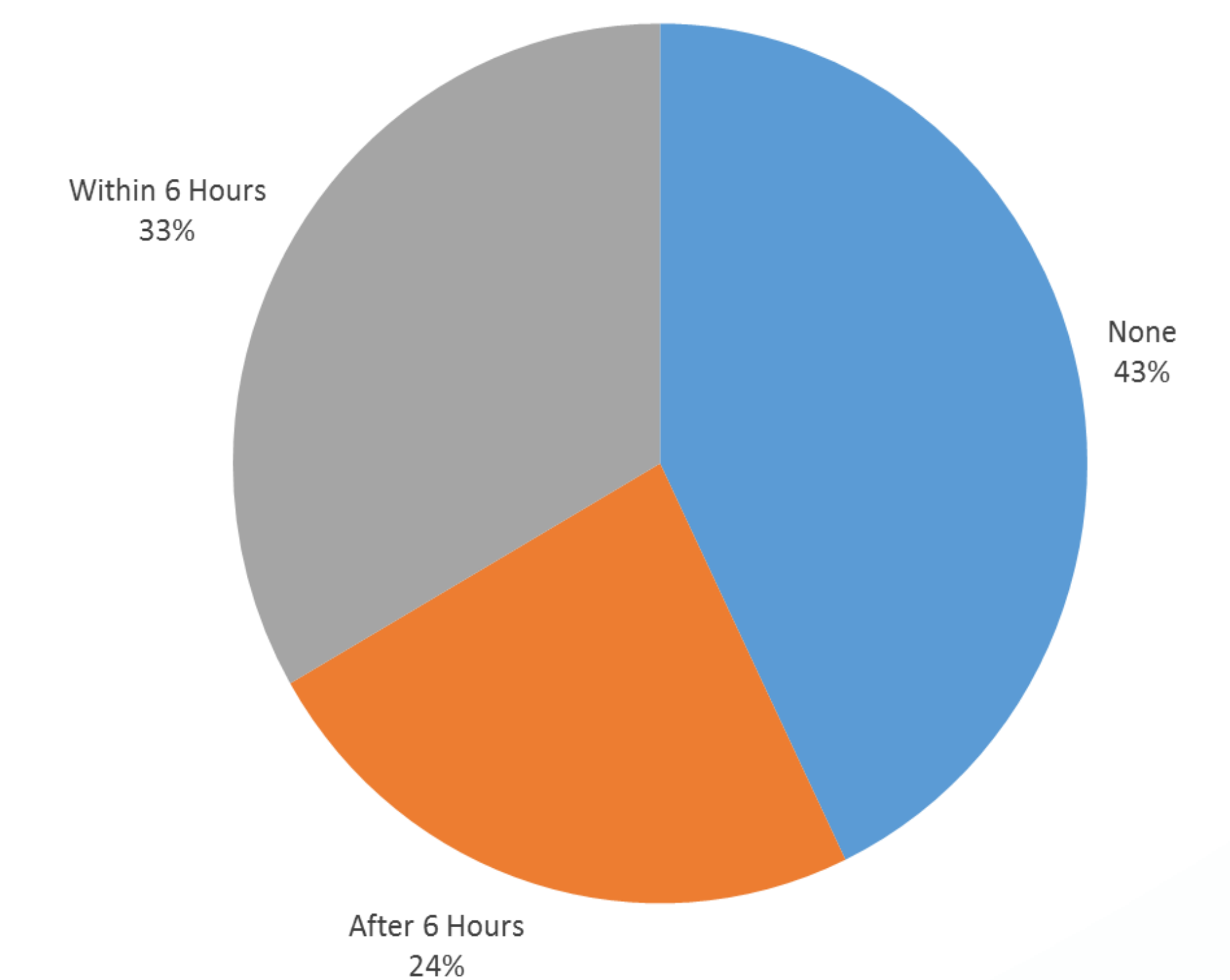
Inhaler sticks filled with 100% pure, therapeutic grade essential oil of ginger were given to each participant. Each participant was then instructed to hold the inhaler 1/2 to 1 inch below the nose, inhale slowly for a count of 5, hold for a count of 5 and then slowly breathe out for a count of 5 and repeat the process two more times.



Data



Time post-aromatherapy to anti-emetic



Results

A total of 19 patients participated in the study and 86% reported a decrease in their nausea symptoms.

Average nausea score pre aromatherapy was 1.73 and 30 minutes after aromatherapy it was 0.68.

67% of patient's relief lasted as long as antiemetic medication- 6 hours or longer

The chi-square statistic is 13.89, $p < .001$.

References

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- Lua Pei L PhD; Zakaria Noor S, BSc. A brief review of current scientific evidence involving aromatherapy use for nausea and vomiting, The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine 2012, Volume 18 (6), pp534-40
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Discussion/Conclusions

Implications for practice: Inhaled essential oil of ginger decreases the severity of nausea, can be self administered, and it is less expensive than medications

Limitations: Small sample size due to limited availability of researchers, study time frame, and study design.

Conclusion: Inhaled aromatherapy with essential oil of ginger appears to be as effective as medication in reducing nausea symptoms.

Further research should examine use of essential oil of ginger to reduce nausea and vomiting prior to administering antiemetic medications in other patient populations.

