**Abstract**

Adult Critical Care units are used to using opioids to relieve patient’s pain. This study is conducted to find if in adult critical care patient’s alternative therapies would reduce the use of opioids for pain management. Using research-based literature reviews, alternative therapies are another way to help to lean patients off opioids and are an alternative way to decrease pain. By educating nurses on how to use these therapies, patients can have an option in choosing complementary therapies to avoid opioid dependence. Alternative therapies can help decrease the opioid epidemic crisis in the United States.

**Methods/EBP**

A systematic review was conducted by the guidance of John Hopkins Nursing Evidence-based Model to determine ways to reduce the use of opioids in adult critical care patients. Steps included identifying the PICO, literature search/selection and analysis utilizing the John Hopkins Evidence-based Practice Nursing Model. When conducting EBP review the steps are as followed:

- **P:** Reducing the usage of opioids and increase the use of alternative therapies to help pain relief.
- **I:** Provide a way of reducing the adverse effects of opioids by integrating alternative therapies.
- **C:** Looking at the use of opioids in the critical care unit.
- **O:** A decrease pain by using alternative therapies to reduce abuse of opioids.

**Literature search:**

- The databases searched were CINAHL, and PubMed.
- Keywords: Opioids, Alternative therapies, critical care unit, pain management, non-pharmacological therapies.
- Total of 8 articles found, two mixed method studies, 3 quantitative studies, focus reviews, systemic reviews, and descriptive correlational studies displayed in Matrix one.

**Results**

After reviewing several research studies, similar results were found regarding the successfullness of alternative pain management strategies. When implementing alternative pain management therapies such as massage, music, and aromatherapy, each of the therapies demonstrated a decreased self-reported pain level in the patients who received these interventions. Each study had a varying level of decrease in patient self-reporting, but even a slight decrease indicated some progression. In a few of these studies, pharmacological methods were implemented in conjunction with the alternatives, which had more effect on the pain levels than the medication had on its own.

**Figure #1** (Summary of Literature Review)

**Conclusions**

130 Americans die every day from an opioid overdose" (Dowell et al., 2016). This epidemic needs to be stopped before more lives are lost. The way to save lives is to move to more alternative therapies for pain relief to decrease the use of opioids, thus decreasing addiction and death. Alternative pain relief strategies are effective in reducing pain of patients. Non-pharmacological pain relief like aromatherapy and massage can be used by themselves, or they can be used together with pharmacological pain relief. Using the two methods together will aid in decreasing the amount of opioids needed for pain relief, if medications are needed. With just a reduction of the amount of opioids taken, health professionals can try to reduce the amounts of addiction, which will then in-turn reduce the amounts of overdose and death. This is such an important topic to research to reduce the amount of individuals taken by the use of opioids. With the use of non-pharmacological methods, it is hypothesized that the amount of opioids will be greatly reduced.

**Recommendations**

More research needs to be done to identify the effects of alternative pain relief therapies specifically for adult critical care patients. Critical care patients typically experience more pain related to their more extensive injuries, therefore, pain relief is extremely important for these patients in particular.

**Background & Problem(s)**

Medications are being used as a primary strategy to manage levels of pain and in most cases, alternative methods aren’t being implemented. The opioid epidemic continues to rise in the United States with roughly 130 deaths per day due to an overdose. The problem begins when pharmacological methods are being used heavily in the health care setting to manage pain in patients without attempting other interventions prior. The use in a health care setting may lead to a potential addiction if careful precautions are not taken. The aim of this study was to determine how successful alternative pain management strategies would be in managing pain and decreasing the need for an opioid medication.

**Bibliography**