Evaluation of the Effect of Reciting the Word “Allah” on the Pain and Anxiety of Dressing Change in Burn Patients

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ABSTRACT

Background: Patients hospitalized in burn wards suffer severe anxiety before going into a dressing room and in spite of opioid administration experience pain and anguish when dressing is changed and during the hospitalization period. As soon as these patients hear the word “dressing room” they show signs of distress. Referring to the verse “Only by reciting the name of God the hearts will find peace” and the fact that the word “reciting” has been repeated for 260 times in Quran we decided to examine the effect of Hazrate Zahra Praises (including 100 recitations of the word “Allah”) on the anxiety before and during dressing change so that in case it is effective opioid administration and the resulting unfavorable side effects are controlled.

Objectives: The study at hand was conducted with the aim of determining the effect of reciting the word “Allah” on the pain and agony of dressing change in burn patients.

Materials and Methods: The present study is a quasi-experimental research. The cases under study are 30 burn patients hospitalized in the burn ward of Hazrate Ayatollah Moosavi Treatment and Training Center. Sampling method was objective-based. Data was collected through questionnaires including three parts. The first part dealt with demographic characteristics, second part with pain intensity assessment using Beyer’s index and the third part with Hospital Anxiety Depression Scale (HADS) and anxiety assessment. Data was analyzed using SPSS 16, Paird t-test and chi2 test.

Results: The results indicated that 57% of the cases under study were men. Their mean age was 33.5 and 68% of the patients suffered second and third degree burns. Mean pain intensity of dressing change without “reciting” was 85.7 and mean pain intensity of dressing change “reciting” the word was 21.5. Paired t-test showed that the difference was statistically significant (P=0.002). Mean anxiety level before “reciting” was 12.14 which decreased to 9.15 after “reciting”. Paired t-test indicated that this difference was statistically significant too (P=0.001).

Conclusions: The findings of the study at hand are indicative of the successful effect of reciting in alleviating pain and reducing anxiety. Ayatollah Makarem e Shirazi notes in the first volume of Tafsire Noomune that “reciting the name of Allah causes the individual to feel more mental ability or strength and the individual will not fear the immensity of problems”. Also many psychologists and psychiatrists have found that praying, reciting and complete attention to God (with all senses and wholeheartedly) distracts the individual from life challenges and mind concerns thus eliminating the sense of fear, worry and perturbation and creating a sense of inner peace.

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Implication for health policy/practice/research/medical education:
Simultaneous integration of this non-drug solution in the procedures of treatment centers can alleviate burn patients’ pain and also reduce the need for opioids minimizing the side effects of such drugs. This method can be taught to the students in the training centers so that they can relax the patients’ physical suffering through meditation of spiritual concepts. In addition, this method can be utilized in any treatment procedure to take advantage of the effect of reciting the holy word and distract the minds of the patients.

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1. Background
For many reasons burns are among the worst tragedies that an individual may experience in today’s modern society. Severe burns impose considerable physical, mental and economic challenges on the patients and their families (1). 2 million people experience burns in the United States every year and burn injuries are among the main morality causes in Iran (2). Around 300 people have been hospitalized in the burn ward of Zanjan’s Treatment and Training Center during the past year (3).

Burn pain is excruciating. The pain prolongs the process of recovery and healing (4). The pain of dressing change leads to side effects like ulcer, duodenal ulcer and negative mental and spiritual impacts on the patients. Patients may even experience swooning, hypotention, incontinence of urine and feces and shock. This pain can be controlled by drug and non-drug solutions. With the appearance of effective tactics the use of non-drug methods has been very common in the past decade (5). Nowadays simultaneous use of drug and non-drug methods is emphasized (4).

In most of Iran’s hospitals’ strong palliatives and opioids are administered to control pain but in regards with physiological and mental reactions such drugs are usually disappointing. In most cases not only they do not effectively reduce the patients’ pain but also impose unfavorable effects of taking opioids on the patients. Nausea, vomiting and drug addiction are among the negative effects of opioids (6). Trusting and believing that there is a reason behind each of the recommendations of the Holy Book and considering verse 41 (Ahzab sura) from Quran “believers, remember Allah frequently”, and “is it not with the remembrance of Allah that hearts are satisfied.” (7) and “so remember me, i will remember you” (8) also the fact that researchers found out most hospitalized patients in the wards experienced dressing change pain despite receiving opioids and require increasingly higher doses of the drug (unfortunately leading to drug addiction as well as its negative effects) we decided to make use of the religious beliefs of the patients and Hazrate Zahra Praises (one of the most known praises among Muslims in which the word “Allah” is repeated 100 times)

2. Objectives
The present study was conducted with the aim of determining the effect of the word “Allah” on the pain and anxiety of dressing change in burn patients so that in case the indications are positive effect, this non-drug method is combined with palliatives to alleviate pain and reduce the required doses of opioids consequently preventing the undesirable drug side effects.

3. Materials and Methods
The study at hand is a quasi-experimental research and the patients hospitalized in the burn ward comprise its research population. The 30 patients hospitalized in the burn ward were selected (by objective-based approach) as samples after their written approvals were obtained. The criteria for entry into the study included being over 15 years old and the second and third day of the hospitalization.

The patients who had committed suicide and burned themselves were not included in the study. Patients’ anxiety was checked 15 minutes before entering the dressing room and after dressing change finished their pain intensity was measured. The next day, half an hour before entering the dressing room, patients were asked to recite Hazrate Zahra Praises for 10 minutes in their room and also while dressing was being changed. Their anxiety and pain levels were measured just as the previous day. In order to decide whether each case should recite on the second or third day of hospitalization every other day mode was applied. In addition 25 mg of Pethidine (which has lesser side effects compared to other opioids) was ad-

Table 1. The Comparison of Mean Dressing Change Pain Intensity and Anxiety Level with Reciting and Without Reciting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Without reciting</th>
<th>With reciting</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety, Mean ± SD</td>
<td>2.83 ± 12.14</td>
<td>2.37 ± 9.15</td>
<td>0.002 a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pain intensity, Mean ± SD</td>
<td>1.4±7.85</td>
<td>2.3 ± 5.21</td>
<td>0.002 a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Abbreviation: SD, Standard deviation

| a Paired Samples T Test |

Quran Med. 2011;1(2)
37
ministered intramuscularly to all patients half an hour before dressing change.

The means of collecting data was a questionnaire comprising of three parts. In the first part demographic characteristics of the cases were recorded. In the second part which had been designed to measure the patients’ pain intensity Beyer’s numerical scale was utilized. This scale is a diagram from 0 to 10 designed on the basis of pain intensity. Number 0 indicates no pain and number 10 indicates severe pain (9). Standard Hospital Anxiety Depression Scale (HADS) questionnaire was used to measure anxiety. The scientific validity and reliability of the questionnaire has been verified in various studies such as Rabi’i and colleagues. The questionnaire includes 14 questions (each question has 4 choices or answers), seven of these questions examine depression and the other seven examine anxiety. Taking into account the research objectives 7 anxiety-related questions were used in this study. Scores 0 to 10 were classified as not anxious and scales 11 to 21 were labeled as anxious (9, 10). The collected data was analyzed by SPSS 16. The descriptive statistics including frequency, percent and t-test were used to compare the means. In order to make sure that the data is normal Kolmogorov–Smirnov statistical test was utilized. $P < 0.5$ was chosen as the significance level.

### 4. Results

The results show that the majority of cases were men (57%). Their mean age was 33.5 Most of them (68%) suffered second and third degree burns. 62% had high school education. There was a significant difference in the mean pain intensity and anxiety level of dressing change between the patients who had recited and who had not (Table 1-3). $\chi^2$ test also indicated this significant difference in pain and anxiety levels between the patients who had recited and who had not.

### 5. Conclusions

The findings of the study at hand indicate that reciting significantly reduces patients’ pain and anxiety.

Ayatollah Makarem e Shirazi notes in the first volume of Tafsir e Noomune that “Reciting the name of Allah causes the individual to feel more mental ability and strength and the individual will not fear the immensity of problems” (12). Also many psychologists and psychiatrists have found that praying, reciting and complete attention to God (with all senses and wholeheartedly) distracts the individual from life challenges and mind concerns thus eliminating the sense of fear, worry and perturbation and creating a sense of inner peace (13). During a three-year research in Amsterdam University professor Van Der Hoffman found out that saying the holy name of “Allah”, repeating it and its resultant sound brings about spiritual relief and repels stress/worry from the body (14). It is believed that the letter “A” starting the word Allah is enunciated through the upper part of the individual’s chest and thus regulates breathing specially if it is repeated and this regulation of breathing produces a spiritual relief in the individual. The letter “L” (second letter in Allah) causes the tongue to touch the upper part of the mouth and when it is repeated in the word “Allah” it plays a role in regulating breathing. The letter “H” moves the lungs and has a very good effect on the cardio-respiratory system regulating heart rate (15).

In a comparative analysis of the effect of Benson’s relaxation technique and repeating religious recitations on the patients’ anxiety level before abdominal surgery Nikbakhte Nasr Abadi and his colleagues realized that both methods were effective in reducing anxiety but blood pressure had been regulated more in the “reciting” group (16). It is suggested that besides the medical treatments, doctors and nurses should pay more attention to the religious beliefs of the patients and their significant role in the success of the treatment procedure. Instead of utiliz-

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**Table 2.** The Frequency of Dressing Change Pain with Reciting and Without Reciting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pain Intensity</th>
<th>Without Reciting</th>
<th></th>
<th>With Reciting</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mild Pain (1-3)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate Pain (4-7)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe Pain (8-10)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>36.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$P$-value</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$P = 0.002$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3.** The Frequency of Dressing Change Anxiety with Reciting and Without Reciting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anxiety</th>
<th>Without Reciting</th>
<th></th>
<th>With Reciting</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Anxious (less than 10)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxious</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$P$-value</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$P = 0.003$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ing Benson’s technique or chin relaxation technique they can take advantage of common and well-known recitations among Iranian Muslims. The present study can be conducted with recitations like “There is no power and will besides the power and will of God almighty” and the results can be compared.

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Authors' Contribution
Azar Avazeh: research designer and corresponding author; Fatemeh Gorbani: sampling; Amir Vahedian Azimi: carrying out statistical tests; Soheila Rabi‘i Siahkali: preparing the questionnaire; Dr. Mohammad Tagi Khodadadi: pharmaceutical advice; Sudabeh Mehdizadeh: typing, editing and clerical affairs

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References