

## Effects of electronic massager on patients with advanced cancer of the prostate

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** The electronic massager has in recent times become so popularized that it is used in the treatment of almost every ailment. Its prescriptions range from treatment of obesity through acute painful conditions to the treatment of complications of cancer conditions. There are many claims and counter claims from the manufacturers of such massagers and it is becoming increasingly difficult to control its usage by people, both the sick and the healthy; even when its use is not obviously indicated. Some of our prostate cancer patients also were not left out in the craze for massagers.

**Objective:** The objective of this study is to determine the effects of the electronic massager on patients with advanced prostate cancer.

**Materials and Methods:** This is a retrospective study done in our unit to find out any effects of using the electronic massager on advanced prostate cancer patients. The folders of patients diagnosed as cancer of the prostate over a period of five years were traced from the Records Department of the University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital, Ituku / Ozalla. Those who had histological diagnosis / clinical late stages i.e. stages III & IV were selected. The effects of electronic massager on those who had used it were studied vis-à-vis their counterparts who did not use it.

**Results:** There were twenty-seven advanced (Stages III & IV) prostate cancer patients seen over a period of five years. Five of the patients used the electronic massagers and all five died within one year of getting readmitted in the hospital; four of them within three months, while the last one died about the seventh month. Those who did not use electronic massagers survived beyond one year from the time of readmission.

**Conclusions:** The use of the electronic massager increases morbidity and mortality rates in prostate cancer patients.

**Keywords:** *Advanced prostate cancer, effects, massager*

### INTRODUCTION

From time immemorial, 'massage' a type of physiotherapy, has been in use in medical practice. There are obvious indications for the use of massage and when it is strongly indicated it can be quite effective. The priority of any sick person is survival hence any information that appears helpful to the patient is always explored. Cancer being one of such deadly diseases afflicting mankind has attracted all sorts of ideas and claims; many of which have been tried with or without success. Electronic massager manufacturers have so advertised their use in almost all kinds of

ailments that electronic massagers could be classified as over-the-counter drug which most often is used on self prescriptions.

We will start this introduction with references to some of the articles and write-ups published by the makers and distributors of some types of electronic massagers. This is very vital because it was the source of the prostate cancer patients 'prescriptions'. Below are some of them.

*"There is not one, but many cures for cancer. But they are all being systematically suppressed by the American Cancer Society*

(ACS), the National Cancer Institute (NCI), and the major oncology centres. They have too much of an interest in the status quo".<sup>1</sup> Robert Atkins in *Cancer Journal*.

*"The bottom line is that cancer patients deserve to know the truth and to make choices based upon this truth. And the truth is that the proven cancer prevention strategies and the real cures for cancer do not need a prescription, nor do they require surgery or barbaric procedures like radiation or chemotherapy. If you will allow yourself to step outside "the box" and actually think for yourself, then this book may save your life or the life of someone you love."*<sup>2</sup> *The Most Eye-Opening Book of 2008*.

*"A treatment that can relieve cancer patients' nausea, pain, fatigue, and depression sounds too good to be true; but the longest (3 years) and largest, (including 1,290 patients) study of its kind verifies that massage eases these and other cancer symptoms--at least in the short term."*<sup>3</sup>

The above three quotations are excerpts from some of the print outs (books) our patients presented to the clinicians in the clinic asking for the opinions of our doctors during consultations. They read these articles and books and became convinced that electronic massager could cure them of their cancers. These are the type of advertisements which patients in dire need of cure swallow without questioning.

In some instances where massaging is indicated, it may bring about an instant relief that could be attributed in some religious quarters to a miraculous intervention. There are obvious indications for the use of a massager.<sup>4</sup>

Some of these conditions may include: Sports' medicine, such as in the treatment of muscle

cramps (muscle pull), and acute hematoma; orthopaedic lesions such as sprain and bruises, stiff joints and some other benign lesions or conditions like osteo arthroses, and arthritis; and cardiothoracic problems such as the use of defibrillator or physical cardiac massage in immediate cardiac arrest, to mention but a few.

Because of televisions, written works, and other audio-visual media advertisements on the use of the electronic massager, it has become widely used in almost all ailments including cancer conditions. Makers of such massagers have made claims and counter claims on its beneficial roles in almost all ailments.

Some of our prostate cancer patients were lost to follow-up. They abandoned orthodox management and resorted to the use of alternative methods, electronic massagers inclusive. They only return to the hospital at the point of death, hence the need to study the effects of these other alternative methods used by the patients, especially electronic massagers which appear more frequently as a common alternative treatment.

Massage as an alternative cancer treatment cannot cure cancer; it may provide some relief from signs and symptoms.<sup>5</sup> But it does not in any way retard the growth and dissemination of cancer. Judging by the basic methods and routes of cancer metastasis, it is obvious that vigorous massage as achieved by the use of an electronic massager improves circulation of blood. This may also affect haematogenous, lymphatic, direct and embolization spreads. Electronic massagers generate a lot of vibration energy made up of mechanical and heat energies, both of which may likely affect these modes of metastasis.

Many people with cancer are interested in trying complementary and alternative treatments as no single therapy is found to be effective and satisfying in all cases of cancer.

*Bupa's Health Team Information declares "If cancer makes one feel as though one has little control over ones health, alternative cancer treatments may offer some hope. But many alternative cancer treatments are unproved and dangerous."*<sup>6</sup>

### **PATIENTS AND METHODS**

A retrospective review of twenty seven advanced (Stages III & IV) prostate cancer patients over a period of five years, was done. The folders of all the patients diagnosed with cancer of the prostate over a period of five years were traced from the records department of the University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital, Ituku / Ozalla and their bio data were extracted. Those clinically diagnosed as late stages (Stages III&IV), and histologically confirmed as cancer were selected. The records of the grades of the cancer were also noted. The regularity of their follow-up visits was cross-checked from the outpatients' records.

Those whose prostate cancers were documented as early or incidental findings were excluded because there were no documentations in such patients' folders with regards to their use of the electronic massager. More over, patients in the early stages of the illness were quite compliant to follow-up. They kept to their clinicians' advice and so there were no documentations of their use of the electronic massager or any other alternative therapy. These patients were grouped into two:

Group I: kept to their appointments and were compliant with the doctors prescription without using any alternative treatment.

Group II: missed their appointments on more than six consecutive occasions, i.e. for a period of over six months, before reappearing. This second group was further categorized into:-

- II a: used electronic massagers during the period they were lost to follow-up
- II b: did not use electronic massagers.

A comparative analysis of the quality and longevity of the patients was then done.

### **RESULTS**

The 27 patients were aged between 55 and 65 years. Eleven of the patients were fully compliant i.e. kept to their follow-up appointments consistently, as follows:

Group I.

Sixteen missed their appointments on more than six consecutive occasions, (a minimum of six months duration) before reappearing to the hospital clinics

Group II.

Sub-Group IIa: did not use the electronic massager but used other alternative therapeutic measures (11 patients).

Group IIb: used the electronic massager in addition to other alternative methods including use of native medications not defined (5 patients).

All 11 patients in Group I lived beyond one year after the diagnosis was made. One out of the 11 patients in group IIa who did not use electronic massager died at the 8<sup>th</sup> month after being readmitted in the ward; the other 10 survived beyond one year. All the patients in group IIb died within one year of coming back to the hospital; 4 of them within 3 months while the last one died about the 7<sup>th</sup> month.

### **DISCUSSION**

Many people with cancer are interested in trying complementary and alternative cancer treatments. If cancer makes one feel as though one has little control over one's health, alternative cancer treatments may offer some hope, "But many alternative cancer treatments are unproved and dangerous"<sup>7</sup>.

According to published reports. Sixteen patients out of 27 could not keep to their appointments in an attempt to find alternative solutions to their ailments, an indication of how unsatisfactory any single treatment option of cancer of the prostate, including the orthodox medicine, could be.

In this study, none of the 27 patients was cured, including those who were compliant with follow up with orthodox medical / surgical management. But there is a significant observable difference between the two subgroups of Group II in terms of post diagnosis life spans. All the patients who used the electronic massager (sub-group IIb) died after a short period of its use, most of them under 3 months; a mortality rate of 100% per annum! But all the patients who complied to their doctors appointments had at least 100% one year survival rate as against the other group. Those in group II had only 56.25% one year survival rate. It is therefore quite significant that the doctor's guidance is very essential to the prolongation and survival of prostate cancer patients.

Only one out of the subgroup IIa, i.e. those who did not keep their appointment but sought other alternative measures, excluding the use of electronic massager died - a one year survival rate of 90.9%. These other methods excluding the use of electronic massagers may or may not be helpful in improvement of the life-span of prostate cancer patients. We are aware that there are some other factors that influence the outcome of cancer conditions such as aggressiveness and Gleason's grade of the tumour but it is most unlikely that those who used these massager had prostate cancers of the same grade and aggressiveness. By implication therefore, it is likely that since all the patients who used the electronic massager died within 1 year or preferably within 3 months, it can be said that the use of electronic massagers quickens the demise of prostate cancer patients.

Massager give their soothing and pain-relieving effects by enhancing blood circulation to areas of application; by so doing massagers may also facilitate the spread of cancer of the prostate. This may actually be extrapolated to include all types of cancers since the mode of metastasis is generally the

same for all types of cancer even though some may spread more readily through a particular route or mode than others. Cancer metastasizes by various routes viz:-

- a. Loco-regional spread sometimes referred to as direct spread or permeation to regional organs and / or adjacent organs and tissues;
- b. Lymphatic spread to loco-regional lymph nodes either by permeation or by embolization and finally to systemic implantation to other fertile distant organs and / or tissues;
- c. Haematogenous route through venous (mainly) and arterial, leading to distant metastasis with affectations of multiple organs and their consequent effects;
- d. Embolization through blood and / or hollow organs (viscera); and
- e. Seeding as may occur in trans-coelomic spread of gastric cancers and direct implantation as seen in 'kissing' cancers'

Advanced prostate cancer results from any combination of lymphatic, blood, or contiguous local spread<sup>8</sup>. A critical examination of the type of vibration energy emitted by electronic massagers may explain the associated deterioration in the health conditions and eventual demise of these prostate cancer patients who used them as alternative therapy to their cancerous conditions.

One old controversial teaching in relation to the use of Acid Phosphatase as a tumour marker in assessing prostate cancer was that simple digital rectal examination (DRE), - a type of gentle prostatic massage, tended to elevate its blood level. It was then advised that "DRE should not be done immediately before collection of samples for acid Phosphatase assays"<sup>9</sup>. Digital rectal examination was such a gentle massage when compared with electronic massager yet it was feared to

accelerate extravasation of the prostatic component of blood acid phosphate level.

### CONCLUSION

We conclude that follow-up of patients and guidance by the doctors may be helpful in the management of prostate cancer. They improve survival rate and longevity of patients with advanced cancer of the prostate.

The use of electronic massagers increases morbidity and mortality rates in prostate cancer patients. Any experimental treatment modalities (such as electronic massager in the treatment of Prostate cancers) must be clearly outlined, with risks and potential benefits<sup>10</sup>.

The use of electronic massagers in the management of cancer (prostatic) patients should be carefully reassessed to avoid unintentional or deliberate euthanasia in the name of using electronic massager.

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