

**CN57** Progressive muscle relaxation and guided imagery techniques and the way of coping of parents of children with malignancies: A randomized controlled trial

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**Background:** The diagnosis of malignancy in a child is among the most intense stressors that a child and a parent can endure (Vrijmoet-Wiersman et al., 2008; Rabineau et al., 2008, Sulkers et al., 2015), due to its connection to death and to the fact that it is perceived as an incurable disease and as a source of intense pain (Woodgate & Degner, 2003a, Long & Marsland, 2011). The aim of this study was to test the effectiveness of relaxation techniques (Progressive Muscle Relaxation/Guided Imagery) concerning coping, on parents of children with malignancy who are getting treatment.

**Methods:** It was a randomized non-blinded control trial, including pre- and post assessments, comparing a 3-week relaxation intervention with the standard psychological care. Participants were recruited consecutively from two Public Pediatric Oncology – Hematology Departments in Cyprus and Greece. Fifty four parents of children hospitalized with a malignancy, were randomly assigned either to the intervention group (n = 29), receiving the ‘PMR’ and ‘GI’ Relaxation Techniques or to the control group (n = 25) receiving only the Standard Psychological Care by nurses and psychologists. Data were collected with the Questionnaire of ‘Ways of Coping Checklist’ (WofCC).

**Results:** The results showed that parents in both intervention and control group prefer using positive ways of coping in stressful situations: positive approach, positive re-evaluation and prayer/daydreaming.

**Conclusions:** The intervention does not seem to have an impact on the coping strategies that parents employ as these are reflected on the WofCC’ factors. The specific relaxation intervention is not recommended to change the way parents cope with stress.

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