Relaxation & Guided Imagery for Diabetes Treatment

Miriam Franco, MSW, Psy.D., MSCS
Certified Guided Imagery Specialist
Former Chair &Professor of Sociology, Immaculata University
Member, Health Care Advisory Council, Multiple Sclerosis Association of America

www.imagerywork.com

Definition of the Problem & Scope of Intervention

Diabetes Mellitus (DM) refers to 2 related illnesses. Both affect how a person metabolizes glucose or blood sugar.

With Type I, pancreas stops producing insulin, perhaps because of an autoimmune disorder.

Pts need carefully monitored insulin replacement therapy to survive.

With Type II, pancreas may/may not produce enough insulin but insulin receptors have shut down, liver may also be affected

Stress & Lifestyle

- Type II Diabetes is associated with high-fat, high caloric diets, sedentary lifestyles, overweight and economic hardship (Black, 2002; Bo, Menat et al, 2002; Votey & Peters, 2005b).

- Stress is a major contributing factor in diabetes.

  *It raises blood glucose by stimulating release of glucose by the liver.

  *It can also interfere with people following their doctors' orders and recommendations (Surwit, van Tilburg et al, 2002; Arsham & Loew, 1997).

Scope & Cost of the Problem

- Diabetes is one of the most prevalent, most expensive and is the fastest growing chronic condition in the US and the world. Over 20 million Americans are diagnosed with it.
- Direct medical expenditures total over 45 billion for glycemic care and over 37 billion for treatment of complications and excess prevalence of general medical conditions (Votey & Peters, 2005b).
- Diabetes is a chronic illness in which outcomes, quality of life, and use of medical resources depend almost entirely on patient compliance.

Patient's Perspective

- The ability to follow prescribed diet, exercise, glucose monitoring, infection prevention and medication regimens is challenging with diabetes.
- Many find this program burdensome and frustrating (Polonsky, 1999).
- Non-compliance is the biggest cause of diabetic complications, including kidney failure, blindness, amputation, and heart disease (Arsham & Loew, 1997).
- Any program that enables pts to better comply with treatment will be extremely valuable and cost-effective.

Compliance with Diabetes Treatment

Diabetics who maintain excellent glycemic control face relatively little risk of kidney failure, retinopathy or amputation.

Improvements in glucose testing and medications have made glucose control possible for a greater number of diabetics.

However, the physical and psychological demands of tight control are difficult for many pts to achieve.

Role of Relaxation & Guided Imagery

Stress reduction is a vital part of diabetes management especially withType II where it appears to lower blood glucose directly (Feinglos, Hastedt & Surwit, 1987).

In Type I, advantages of Relaxation & Guided Imagery stem largely from improved behaviors, although there is some evidence of a direct effect (McGrady & Gerstenmaier, 1990; Ratner, Gross et al, 1990).

Depression & anxiety can be partly relieved through Relaxation & Guided Imagery (Davidson, Fambach & Richardson, 1978; Stetter, Walter et al, 1994;

GI & Coping Behaviors

- Other researchers have found several areas of diabetes self-care behavior to improve in a group of patients who listened to Guided Imagery tapes (Wichowski, Jkubschthis,1999).
- In this study, an imagery script used by health care practitioners with pts was developed & used to aid diabetic clients in maintaining their diabetic regimen. The major treatment areas were blood testing, regular exercise, weight management and consumption of a restricted diet. Several of these areas improved after the use of guided imagery.

CONCLUSION

- A low-cost guided imagery based program can improve compliance in diabetics of both types and improve glycemic control in Type II diabetics.