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The effect of abdominal massage on constipation management and quality of life in elderly individuals

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Constipation is a common problem in elderly individuals that is affecting their quality of life. Constipation is a preventable and manageable problem and pharmacological and non-pharmacological methods are used to solve this problem. This study is a randomized controlled trial with pre-test and post-test, to determine the effect of abdominal massage on constipation management and quality of life in elderly people. In the study conducted in a nursing home in Ankara, 220 elderly individuals were firstly identified with the constipation problem using the Rome II constipation diagnosis criteria. Thirty-five elderly individuals with constipation problems who met the inclusion criteria were randomly assigned to 17 experiments and 18 control groups. Preliminary test data were collected by applying both descriptive characteristics information form and constipation quality of life scale (CQL). Abdomen was massaged to the elderly individuals in the experimental group with gentle movements and light pressure by the investigator 15 minutes a day and five days a week for eight weeks. No attempt was made to the control group, the daily routines continued. After abdominal massage application, post-test data were collected by applying CQL scale to both groups again. Our results showed that abdominal massage was effective in constipation management ($p < 0.05$). Besides, the difference between the experimental and control groups was statistically significant ($p < 0.01$) in terms of constipation life quality scale post-test scores. The constipation life quality scale subscales of the experiment and control group; the difference between the post-test scores of physical disability ($p < 0.01$), psychosocial discomfort ($p < 0.01$), anxiety ($p < 0.01$) and satisfaction ($p < 0.01$) was found statistically significant. As a conclusion, abdominal massage, as one of the independent nursing initiatives, may be suggested to be used in constipation management.