Background
- Labor pain is unavoidable and can be the biggest determining factor of the labor experience.
- In labor, a patient’s anxiety stimulates the sympathetic nervous system and releases stress related hormones which may increase the severity of pain. (perception)
- Nonpharmacologic interventions can decrease anxiety and the perception of pain.
- Aromatherapy is the science of using highly concentrated essential oils or essences to improve physical or psychological well-being.
- Essential oils may be inhaled, applied to the skin, or used in a bath.

Clinical Objective
- Aromatherapy aligns with the IPC Promoting Vaginal Birth initiative as labor coping and support may impact a patients delivery method.
- The goal of this EBP project was to increase patients coping during labor with the use of aromatherapy.

Synthesis of Evidence
- Lavender decreases stress and anxiety during labor; improves patient contentment, and decreases pain perception.
- Aromatherapy benefits include women feeling more in control when they actively manage their pain, lack of serious pharmacological side effects, minimal expense, and ease of use.
- ACOG Committee Opinion 766 Approached to Limit Intervention During Labor and Birth speaks to aromatherapy positively impacting labor coping. Aromatherapy is also endorsed by AWHONN and ACNM professional organizations.

Implementation
- Using the IOWA model, phase one implementation includes multiple steps:
  - Stakeholder approval
  - Purchase of hospital approved aromatherapy premanufactured products
  - Creation of patient education handouts
  - Data collection

Training
- Computer based learning modules
- Policy review
- Unit huddles updates
- EMR documentation
- Data collection tool instruction
- All L&D staff completed training and had access to tips sheets

Data Collection
- Pain scores and/or labor coping were assessed pre and post-aromatherapy
- Other labor support measures were also documented for future review

Outcomes / Conclusions
- To date, 49 patients have chosen to use aromatherapy during their labor.
- 75% of patients felt aromatherapy helped them cope with their early labor.
- The EBP project shows the same conclusions as previous studies that show aromatherapy can help laboring patients cope better in labor.
- Limitations of project: restricted to only 3 Elequil aromatabs® available to order in the system.

Implications for Practice
- Aromatherapy became a quick and easy nonpharmacologic labor support tool we will continue to utilize.
- Nurses and patients felt more empowered providing and receiving complementary and alternative labor support in early labor.
- Phase 2 will expand the menu to 45 essential oils for labor support through direct inhalation.
- NTSV rates and patient experience scores are not the goal of this project, but continued monitoring of these data will help determine if there is correlation using aromatherapy.

References

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