**Purpose:** To explore the interactions and dynamics that develop within a hospital-based rehabilitation group involving heart, lung, kidney, pancreas and liver transplants, as well as patients with Ventricular Assist Devices (VAD).

**Introduction**
Group therapy has been established as a valuable form of treatment for over two centuries (Yalom). Previous research has demonstrated the emotional, supportive, and social benefits of group treatment (Williams). In an acute hospital setting, we believe that patients undergoing solid organ transplantation or VAD implantation benefit from sharing mutual experiences, and finding commonalities as well as challenges encountered during recovery. Members encourage each other and often help those whose spirits are down or may be having a bad day. Patients trade tips for particular diagnoses or let others know what to expect, easing fears and anxiety. Communication between group members focuses on verbal, non-verbal, explicit, and implied messages that are exchanged concerning information, ideas and feelings.

**Group Precautions:**
- Contact or reverse isolation precautions were followed per hospital infection control policy
- VAD and liver transplant patients are not required to wear masks outside of their rooms.
- Cardiac, sternal, and incision precautions for VAD, heart & lung transplant patients:
  - No shoulder elevation greater than 90 degrees
  - No pushing, pulling or lifting anything over 5-10 lbs.
  - Do not excessively pull arms back behind body
  - No excessive reaching over head
  - No lifting of lung transplant patients from under the arms

**Cardiac Warning Signs:**
- Chest discomfort or pressure following any activity
- Pain extending beyond the chest to the arm, back, or even teeth or jaw
- Heart palpitations, shortness of breath
- Sweating, lightheadedness, dizziness
- Nausea/vomiting
- Extreme fatigue, pale skin
- Loss of balance, confusion, dizziness, lightheadedness

**Group Structure:**
Transplant population/VAD population
- 2 days a week (Wednesday & Friday)
- 30 – 90 minute group session
- 1 licensed therapist per 4 patients
- Utilization of a rehabilitation tech
- Use of exercise equipment: weights, ergometer, therapy bars

**Curative Factors Associated with Group Therapy (Yalom):**
- Installation of Hope
- Universality
- Information Giving
- Altruism
- Improved Social Skills
- Imitative Social Skills
- Interpersonal Learning
- Cohesiveness
- Catharsis
- Existential Factors
- Provides a measure of support
- Generates insight amongst members and facilitators
- Allows for sharing of experiences
- Provides reassurance between members and leaders

**Patient Precautions:**
- No excessive reaching over head
- Contact or reverse isolation precautions were followed per hospital infection control policy
- VAD and liver transplant patients are not required to wear masks outside of their rooms.
- Cardiac, sternal, and incision precautions for VAD, heart & lung transplant patients:
  - No shoulder elevation greater than 90 degrees
  - No pushing, pulling or lifting anything over 5-10 lbs.
  - Do not excessively pull arms back behind body
  - No excessive reaching over head
  - No lifting of lung transplant patients from under the arms

**Heart Palpitations, Shortness of Breath**
- Heart palpitations, shortness of breath

**Future Directions:**
- Future plans for formal research project involving survey of patients on mood rating and benefits of participating in hospital based exercise group therapy
- Survey of other healthcare institutions on current group therapy practices in hospital based rehabilitation
- Measurement of patient progress with grading weights, distance of walking, and endurance factors

**References:**