

Research: Mechanical Massage Improves Fibromyalgia Symptoms

Fibromyalgia patients responded positively to a deep-tissue mobilization provided by a motorized device at Memorial Hospital of Union County, Marysville, Ohio. “Use of a Mechanical Massage Technique in the Treatment of Fibromyalgia: A Preliminary Study” investigated the effectiveness of this technique on the symptoms of fibromyalgia syndrome.

Nine female patients diagnosed with fibromyalgia completed the study. Each participant received 15 sessions of mechanical massage once a week, for 35 minutes per session. Physical functioning, days when patients felt good, days of missed work and seven discomfort symptoms were measured with a patient questionnaire before, at week seven and at the end of the 15-week period. The patients’ tender points were examined by the investigator at the same intervals. In addition, after completion of treatment patients were asked whether the treatment was helpful and whether they wanted to continue.

The mechanical massage technique involved the use of a medical device with a two-roller aspiration system that draws, rolls and unrolls folds of skin.* Treatment was administered to the whole body with particular attention to tender points.

To measure physical functioning, days when patients felt good, and days of missed work, a patient questionnaire was used. This Fibromyalgia Impact Questionnaire showed significant improvement in all areas, by averages of at least 50 percent, except days of missed work. The tender- points examination yielded similar results, with a mean improvement of 50 percent. After completing the treatment, 88.9 percent of the patients reported that the treatment was “very” or “enough” helpful and wanted to continue.

The authors conclude that the results of this preliminary study “support the need for a controlled clinical trial on a larger population to determine its efficacy.”

* This device is commonly used to treat burns to prevent skin contraction and loosen scar tissue, and to reduce the appearance of cellulite in a process called endermology.

— Source: *Memorial Hospital of Union County, Marysville, Ohio; LPG Systems, Sophia Antipolis, France. Authors: Chrisanne Gordon, M.D.; Clélia Emiliozzi, Ph.D.; Marie Zartarian, M.D. Originally published in Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Vol. 87, No. 1, January 2006, pp. 145–147.*