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What Do Our Practitioners Think?

Dose response and efficacy of spinal manipulation for chronic cervicogenic headache: a pilot randomized controlled trial.

Headaches and migraines are a common affliction, varying in severity, frequency, duration and associated symptoms, usually with some involvement of neck tension and/or pain. ***This study compares two therapeutic interventions for headache: massage and chiropractic adjustments.*** It also attempts to determine the significance or lack thereof in therapy frequency.

At the outset of care for cervicogenic (related to the neck) headache or migraine, a treatment plan of 2 visits per week for 3-4 weeks is the standard recommendation, decreasing in frequency as indicated by reexamination and outcomes assessments. These typically include patient given verbal pain scales and assessment of ADLs (activities of daily living), and various index scores regarding condition effects on lifestyle.

This study was of interest as it not only included a ***control group receiving light massage*** and an ***experimental group receiving SMT***, spinal manipulative therapy, but it also divided the experimental group into groups receiving ***once weekly or twice weekly*** sessions of SMT for 4 weeks in an effort to determine recommended frequency of therapy.

The conclusions of the study:

- Patients receiving SMT, spinal manipulative therapy, achieved a ***50% improvement in pain scale***
- For SMT patients, the mean ***number of CGH***, chronic cervicogenic headache, ***was reduced by half***
- For the higher dose patients, the advantage was greater than low dose, ***even at 12 and 24 wks*** post-trial.

It is important to highlight the last conclusion as illustrating the longer term benefits of more frequent chiropractic care at the beginning of a treatment plan. A reduction in severity and frequency of pain, each by 50%, is significant in any randomized control study.

It is my experience that a combination of more therapeutic massage (deep tissue rather than "light"), or other interventions, such as electrical muscle stimulation and ultrasound, with chiropractic adjustments (SMT or CMT) shows an even greater and longer lasting benefit for patients.

-Laurel Johnson, DC, LAc, Dipl. OM