



Original Article

Influence of Craniosacral Therapy on Anxiety, Depression and Quality of Life in Patients with Fibromyalgia

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Received 19 May 2009; Accepted 22 July 2009

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Fibromyalgia is considered as a combination of physical, psychological and social disabilities. The causes of pathologic mechanism underlying fibromyalgia are unknown, but fibromyalgia may lead to reduced quality of life. The objective of this study was to analyze the repercussions of craniosacral therapy on depression, anxiety and quality of life in fibromyalgia patients with painful symptoms. An experimental, double-blind longitudinal clinical trial design was undertaken. Eighty-four patients diagnosed with fibromyalgia were randomly assigned to an intervention group (craniosacral therapy) or placebo group (simulated treatment with disconnected ultrasound). The treatment period was 25 weeks. Anxiety, pain, sleep quality, depression and quality of life were determined at baseline and at 10 minutes, 6 months and 1-year post-treatment. State anxiety and trait anxiety, pain, quality of life and Pittsburgh sleep quality index were significantly higher in the intervention versus placebo group after the treatment period and at the 6-month follow-up. However, at the 1-year follow-up, the groups only differed in the Pittsburgh sleep quality index. Approaching fibromyalgia by means of craniosacral therapy contributes to improving anxiety and quality of life levels in these patients.

1. Introduction

There is an increasing interest in the role of psychological factors in fibromyalgia, and studies have been published on associated psychological variables, psychopathological explanations, assessment instruments and psychological intervention programs [1, 2]. Suhr (2003) considered psychological factors to be important for understanding the subjective and objective cognitive disorders of fibromyalgia patients [3]. Various investigations have centered on the relationship of fibromyalgia with pain, depression, anxiety and quality of life. The Copenhagen declaration in 1992 described psychological patterns frequently associated with fibromyalgia, such as anxiety and depression, and there is a growing interest in this aspect among professionals of different fields [4]. Nevertheless, many authors consider that psychological factors

are more frequently the result than the cause of pain and disability in fibromyalgia, and this issue remains controversial [4].

Some symptoms of fibromyalgia are similar to those observed during depression, and antidepressants have been administered to fibromyalgia patients to treat sleep disorders and pain symptoms [4]. Review of the literature on the association between fibromyalgia and depression reveals two divergent research lines. Hudson and others [5] believe that a direct association cannot be established between fibromyalgia and depression, whereas Gruber and others (1996) [6] propose a common etiology for fibromyalgia and depression. Significant differences in psychological state between patients with fibromyalgia and depression were reported in a study on fibromyalgia, pain intensity and duration and psychological alterations; the results of depression and anxiety

Benefits of Craniosacral Therapy in Patients with Chronic Low Back Pain: A Randomized Controlled Trial

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Abstract

Objectives: To evaluate the effects of craniosacral therapy on disability, pain intensity, quality of life, and mobility in patients with low back pain.

Design: A single-blinded randomized controlled trial.

Patients: Sixty-four patients with chronic nonspecific low back pain (mean age \pm SD, 50 ± 12 years; 66% female) who were referred for physical therapy at a clinical unit of the Health Science School of the University of Almeria (Spain).

Interventions: Participants were randomly assigned to an experimental group (10 sessions of craniosacral therapy) or a control group (10 sessions of classic massage).

Outcome measures: Disability (Roland Morris Disability Questionnaire [RMQ, primary outcome] and Oswestry Disability Index), pain intensity (10-point numeric pain rating scale), kinesiophobia (Tampa Scale of Kinesiophobia), isometric endurance of trunk flexor muscles (McQuade test), lumbar mobility in flexion, hemoglobin oxygen saturation, systolic blood pressure, diastolic blood pressure, hemodynamic measures (cardiac index), and biochemical estimation of interstitial fluid. These outcomes were registered at baseline, after treatment, and 1-month follow-up.

Results: No statistically significant differences were seen between groups for the main outcome of the study, the RMQ ($p=0.060$). However, patients receiving craniosacral therapy experienced greater improvement in pain intensity ($p \leq 0.008$), hemoglobin oxygen saturation ($p \leq 0.028$), and systolic blood pressure ($p \leq 0.029$) at immediate- and medium-term and serum potassium ($p=0.023$) level and magnesium ($p=0.012$) at short-term than those receiving classic massage.

Conclusions: Ten sessions of craniosacral therapy resulted in a statistically greater improvement in pain intensity, hemoglobin oxygen saturation, systolic blood pressure, serum potassium, and magnesium level than did 10 sessions of classic massage in patients with low back pain.

Introduction

LOW BACK PAIN (LBP) PLACES the greatest burden on society.¹ LBP is common in the general adult population in Europe, North America, and Australia.² This condition leads to marked limitations in activity and affects the level of disability experienced by the patient. With the recognition that the chronicity of the condition has several determinants, multidisciplinary management of patients with persistent, invalidating LBP has now been widely adopted.^{3,4}

Craniosacral therapy is an alternative and complementary therapy based on the theory that restricted movement at the cranial sutures of the skull negatively affect rhythmic impulses conveyed through the cerebral spinal fluid from the cranium to the sacrum.^{5,6} Restriction within the craniosacral system can affect its components: the brain, spinal cord, and protective membranes. The brain is said to produce involuntary, rhythmic movements within the skull. This movement involves dilation and contraction of the ventricles of the brain, which produce the circulation of the cerebral spinal fluid.^{5,6}

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AOGS MAIN RESEARCH ARTICLE

Effects of craniosacral therapy as adjunct to standard treatment for pelvic girdle pain in pregnant women: a multicenter, single blind, randomized controlled trial

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Key words

Complementary medicine, alternative medicine, craniosacral therapy, pregnancy, pelvic girdle pain, randomized controlled trial

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Conflict of interest

All authors declare they had no support from any organization for the submitted work; no financial relation with any organizations that might have an interest in the submitted work in the previous 3 years; and no other relations or activities that could appear to have influenced the submitted work.

Please cite this article as: Elden H, Östgaard H-C, Glantz A, Marciniak P, Linnér A-C, Olsén MF. Effects of craniosacral therapy as adjunct to standard treatment for pelvic girdle pain in pregnant women: a multicenter, single blind, randomized controlled trial. Acta Obstet Gynecol Scand 2013; DOI: 10.1111/aogs.12096

Received: 6 March 2012
Accepted: 12 January 2013

DOI: 10.1111/aogs.12096

Introduction

Pelvic girdle pain (PGP) is a condition affecting up to 30% of pregnant women (1,2). It causes pain, dysfunction, reduced health-related quality of life (2) and is one of the most common causes of sick leave during pregnancy (3). The risk for PGP in pregnancy is increased

Abstract

Objective. Pelvic girdle pain (PGP) is a disabling condition affecting 30% of pregnant women. The aim of this study was to investigate the efficacy of craniosacral therapy as an adjunct to standard treatment compared with standard treatment alone for PGP during pregnancy. **Design.** Randomized, multicenter, single blind, controlled trial. **Setting.** University hospital, a private clinic and 26 maternity care centers in Gothenburg, Sweden. **Population.** A total of 123 pregnant women with PGP. **Methods.** Participants were randomly assigned to standard treatment (control group, $n = 60$) or standard treatment plus craniosacral therapy (intervention group, $n = 63$). **Main outcome measures.** Primary outcome measures: pain intensity (visual analog scale 0–100 mm) and sick leave. Secondary outcomes: function (Oswestry Disability Index), health-related quality of life (European Quality of Life measure), unpleasantness of pain (visual analog scale), and assessment of the severity of PGP by an independent examiner. **Results.** Between-group differences for morning pain, symptom-free women and function in the last treatment week were in favor of the intervention group. Visual analog scale median was 27 mm (95% confidence interval 24.6–35.9) vs. 35 mm (95% confidence interval 33.5–45.7) ($p = 0.017$) and the function disability index was 40 (range 34–46) vs. 48 (range 40–56) ($p = 0.016$). **Conclusions.** Lower morning pain intensity and less deteriorated function was seen after craniosacral therapy in conjunction with standard treatment compared with standard treatment alone, but no effects regarding evening pain and sick-leave. Treatment effects were small and clinically questionable and conclusions should be drawn carefully. Further studies are warranted before recommending craniosacral therapy for PGP.

Abbreviations: ODI, Oswestry Disability Index; PGP, pelvic girdle pain; VAS, Visual Analog Scale.

Key Message

Significantly lower morning pain intensity and less functional deterioration was noted after craniosacral therapy provided in conjunction with standard treatment compared with standard treatment alone. There were no effects regarding evening pain and sick-leave. Treatment effects are small and clinically questionable and craniosacral therapy cannot be recommended for pelvic girdle pain in pregnancy.

Craniosacral Therapy for the Treatment of Chronic Neck Pain

A Randomized Sham-controlled Trial

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Gustav Dobos, MD*

Objectives: With growing evidence for the effectiveness of craniosacral therapy (CST) for pain management, the efficacy of CST remains unclear. This study therefore aimed at investigating CST in comparison with sham treatment in chronic nonspecific neck pain patients.

Materials and Methods: A total of 54 blinded patients were randomized into either 8 weekly units of CST or light-touch sham treatment. Outcomes were assessed before and after treatment (week 8) and again 3 months later (week 20). The primary outcome was the pain intensity on a visual analog scale at week 8; secondary outcomes included pain on movement, pressure pain sensitivity, functional disability, health-related quality of life, well-being, anxiety, depression, stress perception, pain acceptance, body awareness, patients' global impression of improvement, and safety.

Results: In comparison with sham, CST patients reported significant and clinically relevant effects on pain intensity at week 8 (−21 mm group difference; 95% confidence interval, −32.6 to −9.4; $P = 0.001$; $d = 1.02$) and at week 20 (−16.8 mm group difference; 95% confidence interval, −27.5 to −6.1; $P = 0.003$; $d = 0.88$). Minimal clinically important differences in pain intensity at week 20 were reported by 78% within the CST group, whereas 48% even had substantial clinical benefit. Significant between-group differences at week 20 were also found for pain on movement, functional disability, physical quality of life, anxiety and patients' global improvement. Pressure pain sensitivity and body awareness were significantly improved only at week 8. No serious adverse events were reported.

Discussion: CST was both specifically effective and safe in reducing neck pain intensity and may improve functional disability and the quality of life up to 3 months after intervention.

Key Words: craniosacral therapy, manual therapies, neck pain, sham treatment, randomized controlled trial

(*Clin J Pain* 2016;32:441–449)

Received for publication January 26, 2015; revised September 16, 2015; accepted August 10, 2015.

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DOI: 10.1097/AJP.0000000000000290

Neck pain is a significant public health problem with 1 in 2 people experiencing neck pain at least once in their lifetime.¹ Neck pain is often recurrent, of nonspecific nature, and associated with disability in both social and occupational life.^{2–4} For the treatment of chronic courses, evidence is still limited, as only therapeutic exercises, acupuncture, and manual therapies were recommended in recent clinical practice guidelines.^{5–7} On asking manual therapists about their perception and use of complementary and alternative medicine for the treatment of chronic pain conditions, one repeatedly mentioned treatment was craniosacral therapy (CST).⁸

CST is thought to be a noninvasive, mindfulness-based treatment approach using gentle manual palpation techniques to release fascial restrictions between the cranium and the sacrum.⁹ The craniosacral system anatomically encompasses the structures of the central nervous system including the skull, the cranial sutures, the cerebrospinal fluid, and the membranes of the brain and the spinal cord. It is influenced by and linked to the musculoskeletal system,¹⁰ and presumably to the vascular and endocrine system as well as to the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous system.¹¹ In the craniosacral theory, fascial restrictions within the craniosacral system lead to abnormal, arrhythmic motion of the cerebrospinal fluid. This craniosacral rhythm is assessable by palpation and quantifiable by encephalogram, myelogram, and magnetic resonance imaging.¹² There is also growing evidence for fascial involvement in pain chronification. Studies have shown increased activity of fascial nociceptors within restricted connective tissue, which can contribute to remodeling processes of inflammation and fibrosis, increased tissue stiffness, muscle tension, and chronic pain.^{13,14} However, research on craniosacral diagnostic and treatment mechanisms revealed very heterogeneous results,^{11,12} with only preliminary evidence supporting inherent processes of peripheral and descending pain inhibition due to gentle fascial palpation techniques.^{11,15,16}

The effectiveness of craniosacral treatment on health outcomes has been shown for a number of chronic pain syndromes, but it is limited to observational designs and randomized controlled trials with low to moderate methodological quality.^{17–19} Efficacy studies and studies on musculoskeletal pain have not been conducted to date,²⁰ although neck and back pain were the most frequent symptoms for which CST was requested.²¹ Therefore, this study aimed at investigating the efficacy of CST in chronic nonspecific neck pain in comparison with a manual sham control intervention.

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[J Bodyw Mov Ther.](#) 2021 Jul;27:667-675. doi: 10.1016/j.jbmt.2021.05.010. Epub 2021 May 24.

Effects of CranioSacral therapy upon symptoms of post-acute concussion and Post-Concussion Syndrome: A pilot study

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Affiliations

PMID: 34391304 DOI: [10.1016/j.jbmt.2021.05.010](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbmt.2021.05.010)

Abstract

Objective: The purpose of this study was to investigate the utilization of CranioSacral Therapy (CST) in patients with Post-Concussion Syndrome (PCS) and capture patient-reported perceptions of clinical outcomes of lived treatment experiences.

Design: Two-part, longitudinal study conducted through a chart review of target group, followed by a Patient-reported Treatment Outcome Survey (PTOS).

Participants: A convenience sample of 212 patients with a historical incidence of head trauma not requiring hospitalization was obtained through medical records department dating back ten years. Inclusion criteria for further chart review (n = 67) was determined by identifying patients with a confirmed concussion directly correlated with presenting symptoms and for which CST was specifically sought as a treatment option. Demographics and patient-determined treatment duration data were analyzed by comparison groups extensively suggested in existing literature: Recovery time since injury as either Post-acute concussion (<6 months) or Post-Concussion Syndrome (PCS) (≥6 months); Athletes (A) or Non-athletes (NA); and traditional gender. Final PTOS group criteria was determined by eliminating confounding issues reporting (n = 47): (A, n = 24 and NA, n = 23).

Results: Quantitative data was analyzed via Numerical Analysis, and qualitative data was analyzed via Inductive Content Analysis. Symptoms reported in all charts as well as in the PTOS were consistent with identified PCS subtypes. Utilization of CST revealed that most patients determined the treatment effect upon concussion symptoms within 1-3 sessions. Nearly twice as many sessions were attended in the PCS than post-acute groups. Referral sources, studied for a perspective on local concussion after-care discharge planning, ranged from professional to personal recommendation or self-discovery. A majority of patients met goals of reducing post-acute or PCS as reasons cited by self-determined change-in-status or discharge from service. Patients were asked to indicate on the PTOS which pre- and post-treatment symptoms were helped or not helped by this particular intervention.

Conclusions: Patient-reported changes of PCS symptoms is critical when evaluating treatment options. CST is an experiential treatment that addresses subjective levels of dysfunction, thus it is the patient deciding the value of an intervention. A sizable portion of patients in all groups reported a positive effect upon their symptoms by CST. Patients indicated personal meaning to CST through their utilization of multiple sessions. A high percentage indicated the likelihood of referring others with PCS for CST. Of the 212 patient charts first studied, the 145 not meeting inclusion criteria suggest some chronic conditions may present as long-term effects of older head injuries. CST is a



Review article

Perspectives on the effects and mechanisms of craniosacral therapy: A qualitative study of users' views

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Received 23 February 2014; received in revised form 6 October 2014; accepted 7 October 2014

Abstract

Introduction: Craniosacral Therapy (CST) is a 'body based' complementary or alternative medical practice which aims to support natural healing mechanisms. There is limited evidence regarding its effectiveness or mechanisms of action.

Methods: Qualitative study based on constant comparative methods informed by grounded theory. Semi-structured interviews explored 29 participants' experiences with CST. Inductive thematic analysis resulted in themes, concepts and illustrative quotes.

Results: Participants consulted for pain relief, emotional and psychological issues and help with rehabilitation. All but four participants reported improvement in at least two of the three dimensions of holistic wellbeing: body, mind and spirit, others in one. Experiences during CST included altered perceptual states and other specific sensations and emotions. The importance of the therapeutic relationship was emphasized. Theory emerging from this study regarding CST and the ways in which healing can be enabled holistically suggests that the establishment of a trusting therapeutic relationship enables CST to take clients into altered perceptual states; these in turn facilitate a new level of awareness regarding the interrelatedness of body, mind and spirit, together with an enhanced capacity to care for self and manage health problems.

Conclusion: All participants in this study observed positive changes in their health status and most attributed these to CST; these changes were frequently accompanied by new levels of health awareness which enhanced participants' capacity to self-care. Interviewees were self-selected users of CST and the data are therefore subject to certain methodological biases.

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Keywords: Craniosacral therapy; Self-care; Holistic wellbeing; Qualitative; Grounded theory

Introduction

Craniosacral therapy (CST) is one of many complementary and alternative approaches to health care (CAMs). The cranial

concept was developed from clinical experiences within the field of osteopathy by Dr Andrew Taylor Still (1828–1917), a practising physician, and subsequently one of his students William Garner Sutherland an American osteopath [1]. It is therefore based on careful observation and exploration of the body from the perspective of osteopathic practitioners. Dr John Upledger, also an osteopath, coined the term craniosacral therapy during the 1970s to differentiate the concepts and techniques of CST from pre-existing systems of cranial manipulation [2]². In the

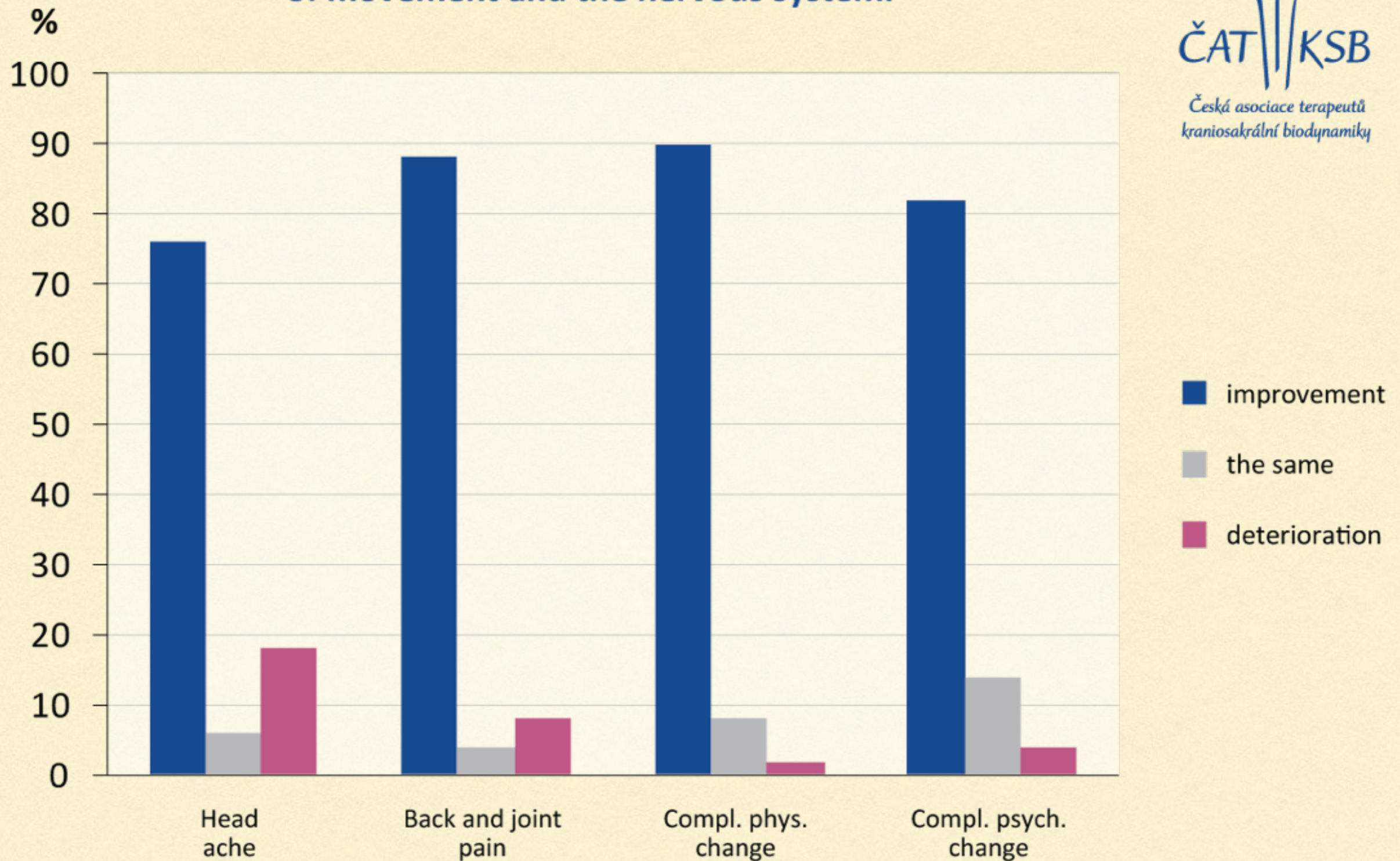
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² The difference between a CST practitioner and a cranial osteopath in the UK lies within the education. Since 2000, anyone who calls themselves an

Results of pilot study: Craniosacral biodynamics and the human apparatus of movement and the nervous system.







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Complementary Therapies in Medicine

Volume 47, December 2019, 102164

Effectiveness of craniosacral therapy in the treatment of infantile colic. A randomized controlled trial ☆

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Abstract

Objectives

To determine the effectiveness of Craniosacral Therapy (CST) for the treatment of infantile colic.

Material and methods

This randomized controlled trial was conducted on 58 infants, aged 0–84 days, diagnosed with infantile colic. The babies received a 30–40 minute CST session once a week (experimental group) or no treatment (control group). Babies in the CST group received either 1, 2 or 3 CST sessions over a 14-day period. Data were collected at 4 different times over the 24-day period, day 0 (baseline), day 7, day 14 and day 24. Crying (primary outcome) and sleep (secondary outcome) were evaluated using a crying and sleep diary, and colic severity was measured using the Infant Colic Severity Questionnaire (secondary outcome).

Results

There was a statistically significant difference between groups (CST and control) in crying hours ($F = 188.47$; $p < 0.0005$; $\eta^2 = 0.78$), sleep hours ($F = 61.20$; $p < 0.0005$, $\eta^2 = 0.54$) and colic severity ($F = 143.74$; $p < 0.0005$, $\eta^2 = 0.73$) across all the time points. In comparison with the control group, CST babies reported significant and clinically relevant effects in crying hours on day 7 (-2.47 h (95%CI, -2.95 to -1.99); $p < 0.0005$; $d = 1.73$), on day 14 (-3.29 h (95%CI, -3.7 to -2.8); $p < 0.0005$; $d = 2.87$) and on day 24 (-3.20 h (95%CI, -3.7 to -2.6); $p < 0.0005$; $d = 2.54$); in sleep hours on day 7 (-2.47 h (95%CI, -2.95 to -1.99); $p < 0.0005$; $d = 1.73$) on day 14



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• Research Article

Heart rate variability and the influence of craniosacral therapy on autonomous nervous system regulation in persons with subjective discomforts: a pilot study

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BACKGROUND: Subjective discomforts in a preclinical range are often due to imbalanced autonomic nervous system activity, which is a focus of craniosacral therapy.

OBJECTIVE: The aim of this work was to determine any changes in heart rate variability (HRV) in a study on craniosacral therapy.

DESIGN, SETTING, PARTICIPANTS AND INTERVENTIONS: This is a quasi-experimental (controlled) study with cross-over design. In a private practice, measurements were performed on 31 patients with subjective discomforts before and after a control and an intervention period. HRV was determined using a device that requires a measuring time of 140 s and electrode contact only with the fingertips.

Main PRIMARY OUTCOME MEASURES: HRV change under the influence of a defined one-time intervention (test intervention) with craniosacral therapy versus control (defined rest period).

RESULTS: Standard deviation of all RR-intervals (ms) and total power of RR-interval variability in the frequency range (ms^2) were together interpreted as an indicator of test subjects' autonomic nervous activity and as a measure of their ability to cope with demands on their health. Neither of these parameters increased during the control period ($P > 0.05$), whereas during the test intervention period there was an increase in both ($P < 0.05$, $P < 0.01$). Nevertheless, interactions between treatment and the increase were statistically not significant ($P > 0.05$). No changes were observed in the low frequency/high frequency ratio (sympathetic-vagal balance) in the course of the control or the test intervention period ($P > 0.05$).

CONCLUSION: Craniosacral treatment had a favourable effect on autonomic nervous activity. This in itself is an interesting result, but further research will be needed to distinguish specific effects of craniosacral therapy technique from less specific therapist-client interaction effects.

KEYWORDS: massage; autonomic nervous system; electrocardiography; adult; complementary therapies; pilot projects

[http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S2095-4964\(14\)60021-2](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S2095-4964(14)60021-2)

Girsberger W, Bänziger U, Lingg G, Lothaller H, Endler PC. Heart rate variability and the influence of craniosacral therapy on autonomous nervous system regulation in persons with subjective discomforts: a pilot study. *J Integr Med.* 2014; 12(3): 156-161.

Received January 21, 2014; accepted February 24, 2014.

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The Effect of Craniosacral Therapy on Blood Levels of Stress Hormones

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Version 1 : Received: 16 September 2023 / Approved: 18 September 2023 / Online: 19 September 2023 (11:52:11 CEST)

How to cite: Wójcik, M.; Bordoni, B.; Siatkowski, I.; Żekanowska, E. The Effect of Craniosacral Therapy on Blood Levels of Stress Hormones. *Preprints* **2023**, 2023091241. <https://doi.org/10.20944/preprints202309.1241.v1>

Abstract

(1) Background: Fire department cadets preparing to become firefighters and paramedics experience high levels of stress when participating in incidents like traffic accidents and fires. Stress adversely affects health and coping with it proves difficult. Unfortunately, there is no single method that reduces stress completely in humans. One non-invasive method for lowering stress hormone levels is craniosacral therapy. (2) Methods: Fifty-seven firefighting cadets aged 18-24 years (21.63 ± 1.41) participated in the study. They were randomly assigned to either a test group or a control group. Participants' blood levels of cortisol and CRH (corticotropin-releasing hormone) were assessed before and after the study. The study group underwent 5-week craniosacral therapy (1x per week). (3) Results: The Kruskal-Wallis test showed that the therapy group's result was statistically significant for CRH values ($p\text{-value}=0.00067$) and for cortisol values ($p\text{-value}<0.0001$). Wilcoxon and Dunn tests showed that statistical significance for cortisol after CS therapy between the control and study groups ($p=0.0377$), and for CRH between the control and study groups before ($p=0.00634$) and after the study ($p=0.000887$), and in the study group before and after the study ($p=0.0101$). (4) Conclusions: Five weeks of craniosacral therapy lowered stress hormone levels. This therapy is a non-invasive tool for reducing stress.

Keywords

stress; cortisol; corticotropin-releasing hormone

Subject

Public Health and Healthcare, Public, Environmental and Occupational Health

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Effect of Craniosacral Therapy on students' symptoms of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder¹

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Objectives: Complementary and alternative medicine methods (CAM) are now used for a wide range of disorders. Craniosacral therapy (CST) is one of CAM methods in which manual maneuvers with light forces are used for different aspects of health. In the present research, the effects of CST were studied for reducing symptoms of attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Method: Twenty-four children with ADHD were recruited as an available sample from Roshd Occupational Therapy Center and divided randomly into control and experimental groups. Before and after intervention, the Conner's Parents Rating Scale as well as child's symptom inventory-4th was filled out by parents. Both groups participated in occupational therapy programs as a routine intervention, while the experimental group received an additional CST for 15 sessions, twice a week. The collected data were analyzed as the covariance method by SPSS16.

Results: CST showed significant effects on increasing attention, reducing hyperactivity, oppositional defiant, conduct disorder, anxiety and embarrassment, social problems and psychosomatic problems of the participants.

Discussion: CST as a type of biomechanical correction can facilitate improvement in children with symptoms of ADHD.

Keywords: Complementary medicine, alternative medicine, craniosacral therapy, Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, Cerebro spinal fluid (CSF).

Submitted: 14 September 2013
Accepted: 1 December 2013

Introduction

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) with a set of hyperactivity symptoms, impulsive behaviors and attention deficit leads to concentration problems (1). The disorder consists of three types including hyperactivity-impulsivity, attention and concentration deficit and mixed type (2). The prevalence rate of the disorder in students and is estimated to occur in 3-7% of school aged children (1) and in Tehran have been reported 3-6% (3). The disorder is always associated with a wide range of negative consequences for children (4, 5) and high costs to the family and communities (6), therefore this disorder is considered as one of collective health problems (7). Nowadays, medication is the most common treatment method in children with ADHD. But, due to the wide range of heterogeneity in children with ADHD, medication is not effective in all clients. Furthermore, even some drugs such as methylphenidate which has been

approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration as a first-line treatment for people ADHD, has different adverse effects. These side effects strongly deteriorates patients' ability to manage their cognitive function such as attention and concentration (8). Therefore, the medication alone cannot meet the therapeutic requirements of children with ADHD and shall be combined with other intervention methods (9). Hitherto, twenty - four alternative treatments are identified in patients with ADHD. Among them are oligoantigenic diets, Enzyme-potentiated desensitization, Relaxation / EMG biofeedback, EEG biofeedback, massage, meditation, mirror feedback, channel-specific Perceptual training, and vestibular stimulation. A few have some supports for their effectiveness in some selected subgroup of patients while, many of them have no documented and or convincing evidences of efficacy. National Centre for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) has introduced a group of

1- The article is derived from Master thesis.

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European Journal of Integrative Medicine xxx (2014) xxx.e1–xxx.e12



Review article

Perspectives on the effects and mechanisms of craniosacral therapy: A qualitative study of users' views

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Received 23 February 2014; received in revised form 6 October 2014; accepted 7 October 2014

Abstract

Introduction: Craniosacral Therapy (CST) is a 'body based' complementary or alternative medical practice which aims to support natural healing mechanisms. There is limited evidence regarding its effectiveness or mechanisms of action.

Methods: Qualitative study based on constant comparative methods informed by grounded theory. Semi-structured interviews explored 29 participants' experiences with CST. Inductive thematic analysis resulted in themes, concepts and illustrative quotes.

Results: Participants consulted for pain relief, emotional and psychological issues and help with rehabilitation. All but four participants reported improvement in at least two of the three dimensions of holistic wellbeing: body, mind and spirit, others in one. Experiences during CST included altered perceptual states and other specific sensations and emotions. The importance of the therapeutic relationship was emphasized. Theory emerging from this study regarding CST and the ways in which healing can be enabled holistically suggests that the establishment of a trusting therapeutic relationship enables CST to take clients into altered perceptual states; these in turn facilitate a new level of awareness regarding the interrelatedness of body, mind and spirit, together with an enhanced capacity to care for self and manage health problems.

Conclusion: All participants in this study observed positive changes in their health status and most attributed these to CST; these changes were frequently accompanied by new levels of health awareness which enhanced participants' capacity to self-care. Interviewees were self-selected users of CST and the data are therefore subject to certain methodological biases.

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Keywords: Craniosacral therapy; Self-care; Holistic wellbeing; Qualitative; Grounded theory

Introduction

Craniosacral therapy (CST) is one of many complementary and alternative approaches to health care (CAMs). The cranial

concept was developed from clinical experiences within the field of osteopathy by Dr Andrew Taylor Still (1828–1917), a practising physician, and subsequently one of his students William Garner Sutherland an American osteopath [1]. It is therefore based on careful observation and exploration of the body from the perspective of osteopathic practitioners. Dr John Upledger, also an osteopath, coined the term craniosacral therapy during the 1970s to differentiate the concepts and techniques of CST from pre-existing systems of cranial manipulation [2]². In the

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² The difference between a CST practitioner and a cranial osteopath in the UK lies within the education. Since 2000, anyone who calls themselves an

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.eujim.2014.10.003>
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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Open Access

Craniosacral therapy for chronic pain: a systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials



Heidemarie Haller^{1*}, Romy Lauche^{2,3,4}, Tobias Sundberg^{4,5}, Gustav Dobos¹ and Holger Cramer^{1,3}

Abstract

Objectives: To systematically assess the evidence of Craniosacral Therapy (CST) for the treatment of chronic pain.

Methods: PubMed, Central, Scopus, PsycInfo and Cinahl were searched up to August 2018. Randomized controlled trials (RCTs) assessing the effects of CST in chronic pain patients were eligible. Standardized mean differences (SMD) and 95% confidence intervals (CI) were calculated for pain intensity and functional disability (primary outcomes) using Hedges' correction for small samples. Secondary outcomes included physical/mental quality of life, global improvement, and safety. Risk of bias was assessed using the Cochrane tool.

Results: Ten RCTs of 681 patients with neck and back pain, migraine, headache, fibromyalgia, epicondylitis, and pelvic girdle pain were included. CST showed greater post intervention effects on: pain intensity (SMD = -0.32, 95%CI = [-0.61,-0.02]) and disability (SMD = -0.58, 95%CI = [-0.92,-0.24]) compared to treatment as usual; on pain intensity (SMD = -0.63, 95%CI = [-0.90,-0.37]) and disability (SMD = -0.54, 95%CI = [-0.81,-0.28]) compared to manual/non-manual sham; and on pain intensity (SMD = -0.53, 95%CI = [-0.89,-0.16]) and disability (SMD = -0.58, 95%CI = [-0.95,-0.21]) compared to active manual treatments. At six months, CST showed greater effects on pain intensity (SMD = -0.59, 95%CI = [-0.99,-0.19]) and disability (SMD = -0.53, 95%CI = [-0.87,-0.19]) versus sham. Secondary outcomes were all significantly more improved in CST patients than in other groups, except for six-month mental quality of life versus sham. Sensitivity analyses revealed robust effects of CST against most risk of bias domains. Five of the 10 RCTs reported safety data. No serious adverse events occurred. Minor adverse events were equally distributed between the groups.

Discussion: In patients with chronic pain, this meta-analysis suggests significant and robust effects of CST on pain and function lasting up to six months. More RCTs strictly following CONSORT are needed to further corroborate the effects and safety of CST on chronic pain.

Protocol registration at Prospero: CRD42018111975.

Keywords: Chronic pain, Craniosacral therapy, Complementary therapies, Meta-analysis, Systematic review

Background

Chronic pain disorders are the leading global cause of disability and are still increasing in prevalence [1]. Low back and neck pain, headache and migraine considerably affect all age groups from the beginning of adolescence to middle-aged and older adults [1]. The often limited effects

and potential side effects of pharmacological treatments for chronic musculoskeletal pain conditions [2] may be reasons why patients frequently use complementary therapies [3–5]. Among them, Craniosacral Therapy (CST) is a typically requested treatment for complaints of the back and neck, headache and migraine, and associated stress-related and mental health problems [6, 7].

Derived from osteopathic manipulative treatment, CST consists of mindful, non-invasive fascial palpation techniques applied between the cranium and sacrum [8, 9]. Besides releasing myofascial structures, CST intends to

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The use and benefits of Craniosacral Therapy in primary health care: A prospective cohort study

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Craniosacral Therapy
Complementary therapies
Primary care
Safety

ABSTRACT

Background: Patients frequently use treatments complementary to standard primary care. This prospective cohort-study examined the use, benefits, and safety of Craniosacral Therapy (CST).

Methods: Consecutive out patients utilizing CST from 2015 to 2019 were asked to provide anonymized data on symptom intensity, functional disability, and quality of life before and after treatment using an adapted 11-point numerical rating scale (NRS) version of the Measure Yourself Medical Outcome Profile (MYMOP). Treatment expectations were assessed as were concurrent therapies/medication and safety. Mean differences were analyzed using paired sample t-tests with 95 % confidence intervals (CI), predictors of treatment response using linear regression modelling.

Results: CST therapists submitted 220 patient records (71.4 % female) including 15.5 % infants and toddlers, 7.7 % children, and 76.8 % adolescents and adults. Patients received on average 7.0 ± 7.3 CST sessions to treat 114 different, acute and chronic conditions. Symptom intensity significantly decreased by -4.38 NRS (95 %CI = -4.69/-4.07), disability by -4.41 NRS (95 %CI = -4.78/-4.05), and quality of life improved by 2.94 NRS (95 %CI = 2.62/3.27). Furthermore, CST enhanced personal resources by 3.10 NRS (95 %CI = 1.99/4.21). Independent positive predictors of change in the adapted total MYMOP score included patients' expectations ($p = .001$) and therapists' CST experience ($p = .013$), negative predictors were symptom duration ($p < .002$) and patient age ($p = .021$); a final categorical predictor was CST type ($p = .023$). Minor but no serious adverse events occurred.

Conclusions: In primary care, patients and parents of underage children use CST for preventive and therapeutic purposes. Considering the design limitations, CST appears to be overall effective and safe in infants, children, and adults.

1. Introduction

Primary care patients suffering from acute and chronic diseases frequently use complementary treatments approaches in addition to standard medical care. This not only applies to adults¹⁻³ but also to parents of young children and adolescents.⁴⁻⁶

Craniosacral Therapy (CST) is derived from osteopathic manipulative treatment and uses mindful, very gentle fascial palpation techniques to reduce sympathetic arousal by modifying body rhythms^{7,8} and to support the body's function and capability of self regulation by relaxing physical and mental structures.⁹⁻¹¹ Treated areas not only include those between cranium and sacrum (as osteopathy does not exclusively treat bones) but also joints, muscles, fasciae, cardiovascular structures, and organs. While physical mechanisms of CST are still understudied, initial

randomized controlled trials have shown specific treatment effects of CST on patient-reported outcomes.¹² Clinical trials have also revealed significant effects of CST in addition to treatment and effectiveness compared to standard therapies in e.g. patients suffering from chronic pain conditions,¹³ infantile colic,¹⁴ attention deficit hyperactivity disorder,¹⁵ and asthma.¹⁶

Beyond that, patients report using CST as a complementary treatment strategy for headaches and migraine, dizziness and tinnitus, gastrointestinal disorders as well as stress-related and mental problems like depression and anxiety.^{17,18} In children, CST is used to support symptom alleviation of respiratory, oncological, allergic, autism spectrum, and gastroenterological diseases.¹⁹⁻²¹ In the UK and Switzerland, NHS cancer centers²² and psychiatric university hospitals²³ have established treatment concepts integrating CST into conventional in-

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ctim.2021.102702>

Received 4 January 2021; Received in revised form 22 February 2021; Accepted 24 February 2021

Available online 26 February 2021

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Controlled Clinical Trial [J Bodyw Mov Ther.](#) 2018 Jul;22(3):666-672.
doi: 10.1016/j.jbmt.2017.11.013. Epub 2017 Dec 9.

Cardiac autonomic response after cranial technique of the fourth ventricle (cv4) compression in systemic hypertensive subjects

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Affiliations

PMID: 30100295 DOI: [10.1016/j.jbmt.2017.11.013](#)

Abstract

Objective: The aim of this study was to compare blood pressure (BP) behavior and heart rate variability (HRV) among hypertensive stage I and normotensive individuals who were submitted to the cranial technique of the 4th ventricle compression (CV4), an osteopathic technique.

Methods: In this experimental controlled study, thirty men between 40 and 60 years old were evaluated and divided into two groups: normotensive (NT) and hypertensive (HT). The CV4 maneuver was applied in both groups and BP was measured at 5 (five) different stages: pre and post-intervention, 5, 10 and 15min after technique. Time-frequency parameters were obtained from measurements of RR intervals. Data were analyzed using an ANOVA two-way for analysis of the condition factor (NT and HT) and times with p-value $\leq .05$.

Results: There was a reduction in the BP of the HT group. A significant intergroup difference ($p = .01$) was noticed, with respect to the standard deviation of successive normal R-R intervals (SDNN) values, mainly between pre-intervention and 15min stages. Concerning root mean square of the mean squared differences (RNSSD) values, the highlights were differences between pre-intervention and 10min ($p = .01$) only in the NT group. There was an increase in high frequencies (HF) values and a low frequencies (LF) attenuation in both groups at all different stages.

Conclusion: The data showed a BP reduction in the HT group in pre-intervention/15min and an increase in parasympathetic activity and decreased sympathetic activity in both groups. This suggests a change in the sympathetic-vagal balance. However, further studies are needed to elucidate the data on BP reduction mechanisms with CV4.

Keywords: Heart rate variability; Hypertension; Musculoskeletal manipulations; Osteopathic medicine.

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Medical

POSTER PRESENTATION

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P02.55. Craniosacral therapy for migraine: a feasibility study

J Mann¹, S Gaylord^{1*}, K Faurot¹, C Suchindran², R Coeytaux³, L Wilkinson⁴, R Coble¹, P Curtis¹

From International Research Congress on Integrative Medicine and Health 2012
Portland, Oregon, USA. 15-18 May 2012

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to evaluate feasibility and obtain preliminary efficacy estimates comparing craniosacral therapy (CST) with an attention-control condition for the adjunctive treatment of migraine.

Methods

Individuals with moderate to severe migraine were recruited from specialty clinics, family practices, and the university community. After confirmatory clinical evaluation and an 8-week run-in phase, those meeting study criteria (compliant with study procedures, at least 5 migraines per month) were randomized to 8 weekly CST or low-strength static magnet therapy (LSSM) treatments. Study participants were followed for 4 weeks after the conclusion of therapy. Primary outcome measures included headache frequency and headache-specific quality of life (HIT-6). Secondary headache-specific measures include headache-related disability (MIDAS), headache intensity, and abortive medication use.

Results

At baseline, participants reported a mean 14 headache days per month and severe headache-related quality-of-life impact and disability. Compliance with study procedures was excellent, with 60 of 69 randomized individuals completing 8 weeks of therapy. Individuals in both treatment groups appeared to benefit from the therapy. A significant difference, favoring CST, was noted by treatment group in mean headache hours per day 30 days post treatment (1.89 vs. 2.78, $p=0.003$). HIT-6 scores decreased significantly in both groups, but without a between-group difference at the last treatment visit. MIDAS scores improved in the CST, but not the LSSM group at 4 weeks post treatment. Headache intensity was reduced more in the CST

compared with the LSSM group, but the difference was not statistically significant. Abortive medication use decreased substantially in both groups during treatment.

Conclusion

Our results show that conducting a randomized clinical trial of CST for migraine using a standardized protocol is feasible and that adjunctive CST may reduce headaches in those with severe migraine. Protocol modifications may enhance future investigations of CST for migraine.

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Published: 12 June 2012

doi:10.1186/1472-6882-12-S1-P111

Cite this article as: Mann et al.: P02.55. Craniosacral therapy for migraine: a feasibility study. *BMC Complementary and Alternative Medicine* 2012 **12**(Suppl 1):P111.

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Article

Effect of a Craniosacral Therapy Protocol in People with Migraine: A Randomized Controlled Trial

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Abstract: *Background:* Migraine is a common neurological disorder, and it is the second leading cause of disability worldwide. Manual techniques based on physical therapy have been proposed to improve migraine aspects; however, further research is needed on their effectiveness. The aim of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of a craniosacral therapy protocol on different features in migraine patients. *Methods:* Fifty individuals with migraine were randomly divided into two groups ($n = 25$ per group): (i) craniosacral therapy group (CTG), following a craniosacral therapy protocol, and (ii) sham control group (SCG), with a sham treatment. The analyzed variables were pain, migraine severity and frequency of episodes, functional, emotional, and overall disability, medication intake, and self-reported perceived changes, at baseline, after a 4 week intervention, and at 8 week follow-up. *Results:* After the intervention, the CTG significantly reduced pain ($p = 0.01$), frequency of episodes ($p = 0.001$), functional ($p = 0.001$) and overall disability ($p = 0.02$), and medication intake ($p = 0.01$), as well as led to a significantly higher self-reported perception of change ($p = 0.01$), when compared to SCG. In addition, the results were maintained at follow-up evaluation in all variables. *Conclusions:* A protocol based on craniosacral therapy is effective in improving pain, frequency of episodes, functional and overall disability, and medication intake in migraineurs. This protocol may be considered as a therapeutic approach in migraine patients.

Keywords: migraine; physiotherapy; manual therapy



Citation: Muñoz-Gómez, E.; Inglés, M.; Aguilar-Rodríguez, M.; Mollà-Casanova, S.; Sempere-Rubio, N.; Serra-Añó, P.; Espí-López, G.V. Effect of a Craniosacral Therapy Protocol in People with Migraine: A Randomized Controlled Trial. *J. Clin. Med.* **2022**, *11*, 759. <https://doi.org/10.3390/jcm11030759>

Academic Editor: Antonio Russo

Received: 17 January 2022

Accepted: 28 January 2022

Published: 30 January 2022

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
1. Introduction

A migraine is a primary headache, and it is one of the major leading causes of disability in people under the age of 50 [1,2]. Migraine constitutes a complex brain network disorder with a strong genetic basis that involves multiple subcortical, cortical, and brainstem regions [3]. Moreover, patients with migraine may present musculoskeletal dysfunctions [4], which in turn facilitate the development of migraine [5]. Furthermore, there are other types of alterations that can mediate the generation of migraines, such as certain emotional disorders [6,7]. Indeed, emotional stress and negative emotional events have been shown to play an important role in precipitating or exacerbating migraine attacks [7].

The most common preventive and symptomatic treatment for migraine is pharmacological. However, this type of treatment involves some side-effects, such as gastrointestinal, cardiovascular, and central nervous system complications [8]; hence, other treatments may be an alternative, such as psychological treatment, patient education, acupuncture, supervised physical activity, and manual techniques (i.e., chiropractic treatment and physiotherapy) [9–12].

Assessing the efficacy and safety of Craniosacral therapy for migraine

A single center randomized controlled trial

Guangya Jiang, MD^a, Saichao Ma, MD^b, Jinfeng Zhao, MD^c, Ming Zhang, MD^d, Yan Li, MD^d, Wenli Chen, MD^b, Lin Cui, MD^e, Liuyun Jia, MD^{a,*} 

Abstract

Objective: Design a feasible study to assess the efficacy and safety of Craniosacral therapy (CST) in the treatment of migraine, using a rigorous and innovative randomized controlled study design involving complementary light-touch sham treatments (CLST) as an attention control intervention.

Methods: This was a single-center, randomized, cross-over placebo-controlled experimental design. A total of 87 participants who suffered migraine attacks from 4 to 9 per month were randomly assigned into either 2 weekly units of CST or CLST for 4 weeks. And then the 2 groups were crossed and continued treatment for 4 weeks plus a follow-up observation for 4 weeks. As the primary outcome measures, Headache Impact Test-6 (HIT-6) and headache frequency were assessed every 4 weeks (at baseline, week 4, week 8 and week 12). The secondary outcome was the scores of Headache Disability inventory (HDI) and the Hamilton Anxiety Scale (HAMA) as well as the adverse events.

Results: All 87 individuals had been screened for eligibility, of which 60 were licensed for the study. The difference of HIT-6 and headache frequency between the 2 groups was not significant at the baseline. But the headache frequency and HIT-6 of 2 groups were all declined respectively after the CST at week 4 (group A) and week 8 (group B) than before ($P^* = 0.01 < 0.05$, 95% CI, -3.06 to -1.87; $P^{\#} = 0.01 < 0.05$, 95% CI, -3.52 to -2.53; $P^{1A} = 0.01 < 0.05$, 95% CI, 4.55-11.7; $P^{2B} = 0.01 < 0.05$, 95% CI, -11.78 to -6.01) while the changes were not obvious after CLST with previous treatment. The scores and frequency of fourth evaluation showed that there was no significant increase or decrease in both the 2 groups. Besides, we found that the mean scores of HIT-6 for all participants, compared with the baseline, were decreased significantly after the 3 round treatments ($P^{3A} = 0.01 < 0.05$, 95% CI, -13.12 to -6.4; $P^{3B} = 0.01 < 0.05$, CI, -12.73 to -6.69). We also showed the similar result in the scores of HDI and HAMA.

Conclusion: The results indicated that standardized CST was both effective and safe in alleviating the migraine intensity and frequency as well as the headache-related disability. Further larger research is needed.

Abbreviations: CLST = complementary light-touch sham treatments, CST = Craniosacral therapy, HAMA = Hamilton Anxiety Scale, HDI = Headache Disability inventory, HIT-6 = Headache Impact Test-6.

Keywords: complementary light-touch sham treatments, Craniosacral therapy, headache frequency, Headache Impact Test-6, migraine

1. Introduction

Migraine is a common disabling condition that spans the globe.^[1] According to the review by Burch et al, migraine affects approximately 1 out of every 6 American adult population and 1 in 5 women over the past 3-month period.^[2] Unlike other chronic diseases, people who are usually healthy,

young and middle-aged are more likely to get sick and women are more prone than men, especially for those aged 18 to 44 years.^[3] Although migraine itself does not reduce life expectancy and the morbidity decreases as people age, it can have considerable impact on peoples' lives and present a significant socioeconomic burden.^[4] Those who are experiencing severe migraine may be tired to do daily activities or even absent from

The authors have no funding and conflicts of interest to disclose.

All data generated or analyzed during this study are included in this published article [and its supplementary information files].

Clinical Trial Registration-URL: <http://www.clinicaltrials.gov>. Unique identifier: ChiCTR2100050264. Retrospectively registered.2021.08.24.

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How to cite this article: Jiang G, Ma S, Zhao J, Zhang M, Li Y, Chen W, Cui L, Jia L. Assessing the efficacy and safety of Craniosacral therapy for migraine: A single center randomized controlled trial. *Medicine* 2023;102:45(e35431).

Received: 15 May 2023 / Received in final form: 28 August 2023 / Accepted: 29 August 2023

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1097/MD.00000000000035431>



> [ORL J Otorhinolaryngol Relat Spec.](#) 2021;83(1):7-13. doi: 10.1159/000509486.
Epub 2020 Sep 9.

Effects of Craniosacral Osteopathy in Patients with Peripheral Vestibular Pathology

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Affiliations

PMID: 32906128 DOI: [10.1159/000509486](#)

Abstract

Introduction: Vertigo appears as a result of a sudden neural activity imbalance of the vestibular system. The vertigo prevalence is higher in patients over 60 years of age compared to patients under 40 years of age.

Objectives: The purpose of this study was to analyze the effect of craniosacral osteopathy on dizziness and balance in individuals who have peripheral vestibular pathology.

Methods: A total of 30 individuals, aged 24-50 years, participated in this study. Twenty-four of the participants were female (80%) and 6 were male (20%). The participants were separated into 2 groups, with 15 patients included in the cranial osteopathy treatment group (study group) and 15 patients included in the group that used dimenhydrinate (control group). The individuals were evaluated in terms of dizziness and balance. A visual analog scale was used to evaluate dizziness. Balance was evaluated using the Berg balance scale and the Activities-Specific Balance Confidence scale. The craniosacral treatment program was applied once per week for 6 sessions. All of the individuals included in this study were evaluated 3 times, i.e., prior to treatment, on the third week of treatment, and on the sixth week of treatment.

Results: Significant improvement was noted within each group in terms of dizziness and balance ($p < 0.05$). When the groups were compared with each other, it was observed that craniosacral osteopathy was more effective than dimenhydrinate treatment for dizziness and balance ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusion: Craniosacral osteopathy is an effective treatment choice in individuals who have chronic peripheral vestibular pathology. In individuals who have resistant and chronic vestibular pathology, craniosacral osteopathy should be evaluated among the treatment choices.

Keywords: Balance; Osteopathy; Peripheral vertigo; Peripheral vestibular pathology; Vertigo; Vestibular disorders; Vestibular suppressant.

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[Medicine \(Baltimore\)](#). 2023 Feb 3; 102(5): e32744.

PMCID: PMC9901966

Published online 2023 Feb 3. doi: [10.1097/MD.00000000000032744](https://doi.org/10.1097/MD.00000000000032744)

PMID: [36749266](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36749266/)

Effectiveness of craniosacral therapy in the human suboccipital region on hamstring muscle: A meta-analysis based on current evidence

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Background:

Craniosacral therapy (CST) has remained controversial in the treatment of musculoskeletal disorders. To our knowledge, there is no larger sample size of research to demonstrate the effectiveness of craniosacral therapy in the human suboccipital region on hamstring muscle.

Methods:

To study whether the CST in the human suboccipital region could have a remote effect on the flexibility of the hamstring muscles, the Cochrane Library, Medline/Pubmed, CNKI, Embase, and Google Scholar were searched. Clinical trials assessing the effects of CST in short hamstring syndrome patients were eligible. Mean differences (MD) and 95% confidence intervals (CI) were calculated for the straight leg raise test (primary outcomes). The quality of the included studies was assessed using the Newcastle-Ottawa Scale. RevMan 5.3 software was used for data analysis.

Results:

Five controlled trials with a total of 238 participants were included. CST could effectively relieve the symptoms of short hamstring syndrome patients [the overall MD -9.47 , 95% confidence interval (CI) -15.82 to -3.12 , $P < .000001$]. The CST was better than the proprioceptive neuromuscular



Combining psychotherapy with craniosacral therapy for severe traumatized patients: A qualitative study from an outpatient clinic in Norway

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
Traumatization
Focused cognitive behavioural therapy (TFCBT)
Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing EMDR
Psychotherapy
Craniosacral therapy (CST)
Holism
Patient safety

ABSTRACT

Background: Craniosacral therapy (CST) is an established complementary modality for several health complaints. A clinic for psychosomatics in Norway has included CST into a multimodal treatment approach for severely traumatized patients. The aim of this study was to investigate and describe the indications for the use of craniosacral therapy within trauma therapy. Specifically, to explore treatment philosophy, criteria for improvement, treatment aims, and the evaluation of the risk profile of the multimodal treatment approach.

Methods: Semi-structured individual interviews (n = 8) and one focus group interview were conducted with the therapists at the Clinic for Psychosomatics, Hospital of Southern Norway, Kristiansand, Norway. The text data were transcribed verbatim, and the analysis of the material was conducted according to conventional and direct content analysis.

Results: The therapists at the clinic applied a holistic treatment approach, based on their understanding of mind and body as one entity. To access emotions and traumata, they used a mixture of different treatment techniques. The therapists experienced patients with severe bodily symptoms as being less cognitively present and attributed this to the symptoms craving most mental resources. The craniosacral therapists' specific aims and task within the multimodal trauma therapy was to ease these physical complaints, so that cognitive and emotional resources could be utilized for therapy. The psychotherapists found that emotions and traumata were more accessible after CST. The general treatment goals were to increase symptom tolerance levels and to enable better self-care. Furthermore, the ability to transform negative behaviors and develop positive alternatives were considered to be signs of improvement.

Conclusion: The study participants considered that patients with complex traumas, including post-traumatic stress disorder, seemed to benefit from this multimodal treatment approach and appreciated its' holistic treatment philosophy, including craniosacral therapy. With regard to patient safety, the study participants recommended that craniosacral therapy for severely traumatized patients should only be provided in cooperation with psychotherapists, or other highly qualified health personnel working in specialized institutions.

1. Background

In psychology, the term trauma is used in situations that adversely

affect the individual's mental health or personality development.¹ Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can occur following exceptionally threatening or traumatic events.^{2,3} Common symptoms include

Abbreviations: NAFKAM, The National Research Center in Complementary and Alternative Medicine; PTSD, Post-traumatic stress disorder; TFCBT, trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy; EMDR, Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing; CBT, cognitive behavioral therapy; CSF, cerebrospinal fluid; CAM, complementary and alternative medicine; IRCT, International Rehabilitation Council for Victims of Torture; NET, Narrative Exposure Therapy; DPS, District Psychiatric Center; TMJ, temporomandibular; HSCL 25, Hopkins symptom check list 25

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ctim.2020.102320>

Received 25 August 2019; Received in revised form 7 January 2020; Accepted 15 January 2020

Available online 16 January 2020

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Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Bodywork & Movement Therapies

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Fascia Science and Clinical Applications

Direct measurement of the rhythmic motions of the human head identifies a third rhythm

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 22 November 2019

Received in revised form

21 July 2020

Accepted 29 August 2020

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Central to the osteopathic cranial field, and at the same time controversial, is the concept of a unique rhythmic movement believed to originate from a primary respiratory mechanism (PRM). Further, the PRM is reported to manifest as a cranial rhythmic impulse (CRI) on the living human skull. This study explores the rhythmic oscillations of the human head measured directly as physical movements. The aim is to investigate the existence of a third rhythm distinct from the head movements caused by respiratory breathing and arterial pulsing, in an objective and purely experimental study.

Experimental: In 50 healthy individuals, rhythmic oscillations of the head were measured in real-time for 42 min in a supine resting state without any intervention. A newly developed machine for tracking rhythmic movements was used for measurements.

Results: In all individuals, a third rhythm was distinguished as separate from the arterial and respiratory rhythm at all times. The third rhythm was observed as a dynamic physiological phenomenon with a narrow range in resting healthy individuals with a mean of 6.16 cycles/minute (4.25–7.07). The significant contribution to the amplitude of the measured movements was the respiratory breathing and this third rhythm, whereas the contribution from the arterial pulsing were minor.

Conclusion: The present study demonstrates the existence, and normative range of a third physical rhythm detected on the human head. Having developed an objective approach to studying this third rhythm might form the future basis for clinical and physiological studies of craniosacral function and dysfunction.

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1. Introduction

A core belief of the whole osteopathic cranial concept is the existence of a rhythmic movement different from the respiratory breathing and the arterial pulse. This new rhythmic movement was named the primary respiratory mechanism (PRM) by Dr. William G. Sutherland, the developer of osteopathy in the cranial field (Sutherland 1939). Since the beginning of osteopathy in the cranial field, the existence and nature of the PRM have created a continually controversial debate in scientific literature and public forums.

A manifestation of the PRM is postulated to be a movement referred to as the cranial rhythmic impulse (CRI) when palpated or measured on the head. Palpation of the CRI is central in the

craniosacral evaluation and is used worldwide by a high number of therapists as part of craniosacral assessments concerning Cranio-Sacral Treatments (CST) and in osteopathy in the cranial field. From a scientific point of view, evidence for reliability in craniosacral assessment is not clear. Interobserver agreement is lacking, and palpation studies report on a wide range of CRI's (review in Nielson et al., 2006). A significant source of the criticism and controversy of both the existence and reported range of the CRI in humans is the subjective approach to study the CRI by palpation. An objective approach to study the existence of the CRI was attempted by Dr. Viola Fryman (1971), measuring physical movements on the head directly. The drawback of the direct measurements was a high pressure on the head from the equipment used, and that participants had to hold their breath to exclude respiratory movements. Other studies have used indirect measurements (review in Nielson et al., 2006).

In line with the study of Fryman (1971), we developed a machine to measure rhythmic movements as a direct physical

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[J Bodyw Mov Ther.](#) 2017 Jan;21(1):19-29. doi: 10.1016/j.jbmt.2016.06.006. Epub 2016 Jun 17.

The use of CranioSacral therapy for Autism Spectrum Disorders: Benefits from the viewpoints of parents, clients, and therapists

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Affiliations

PMID: 28167177 DOI: [10.1016/j.jbmt.2016.06.006](#)

Abstract

Objectives: The objectives of this preliminary study were to explore: the use of CranioSacral Therapy for persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder, the demographics of participants, and the retrospective interpretation of reported changes related to the intervention. Participants included therapists, parents, and clients.

Methods: Recruitment of participants was conducted through electronic social and professional networks. Online questionnaire surveys were provided. Demographic questions were posed to understand both the extent of clinical use and the rationales for such treatment, and surveys were unique to each subject groups. All participants were given a 20-item functional behavior checklist as a means to measure their perception of change attributed to this intervention. Open-ended comments were also encouraged to explore perspectives from their experiential treatments. The Qualitative data collected was analyzed via Inductive Content Analysis. The data was stored on excel and analyzed manually and independently by all 3 authors.

Results: A total of 405 people responded to the recruitments and of the participants who completed surveys, 264 were therapists and 124 parents. Only a small sampling of clients responded. The demographics of professionals using CST for ASD, their level of CST training, and their qualifications to work with ASD were reflected. Demographics and referral sources of parents, and other details of their experiences, were surveyed. Perceived changes to the use of CST were explored through analysis of responses to both the Likert scale as well as the open comments.

Conclusions: This preliminary study introduces the concept of CranioSacral Therapy as a treatment option for symptoms associated with ASD. Its clinical use has been available for three decades but few empirical studies exist. The results of the survey suggest that CST is already being professionally recommended as a treatment. This study found that there were positive responses observed by all 3 targeted groups leading to the authors concluding that there is worthy cause to further investigate how CST benefits Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD).

Keywords: Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD); Brain inflammation; CranioSacral Therapy (CST); Experiential treatment; Upledger 10-Step protocol.

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Review [Altern Ther Health Med](#). 2009 Nov-Dec;15(6):38-42.

Temporal bone misalignment and motion asymmetry as a cause of vertigo: the craniosacral model

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PMID: 19943575

Abstract

Objective: To describe dysfunction of the craniosacral system, particularly temporal bone motion asymmetry, as a cause of vertigo and to suggest a new perspective on research, diagnosis, and treatment.

Data sources: A database search was conducted using MEDLINE, CINHALL; Health Sources: Nursing/Academic Edition; and the Internet.

Keywords: vertigo diagnosis and treatment, craniosacral therapy, temporal bones, cranial bone mobility, Upledger, and temporomandibular disorders.

Study selection: Articles that most clearly described a relationship between cranial bone misalignment and vertigo were selected for review.

Conclusion: Clinical experience suggests that craniosacral therapy is a powerful evaluative and treatment modality for vertigo patients who have not found relief from medical treatments. A narrative review of the literature describes and supports a theoretical link between dysfunction of the craniosacral system and vertigo. Dysfunction of the craniosacral system may include osseous, dural membrane, and fascial restrictions leading to asymmetric temporal bone movement and hence vertigo. Clinical trials are necessary not only to verify that craniosacral therapy is an effective treatment but also to determine the full range of symptoms and medical diagnoses for which craniosacral therapy is beneficial.

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Management of Post-Viral Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome With Craniosacral Therapy

Leonid Tafler • Aysham Chaudry • Heejin Cho • Angeles Garcia

Published: February 15, 2023

DOI: 10.7759/cureus.35009


Cite this article as: Tafler L, Chaudry A, Cho H, et al. (February 15, 2023) Management of Post-Viral Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome With Craniosacral Therapy . Cureus 15(2): e35009. doi:10.7759/cureus.35009

Abstract

Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome (POTS) is a rare disorder of the autonomic nervous system. The number of people afflicted with this dysautonomia has increased dramatically in recent years due to the long-term effects of coronavirus disease (COVID-19); however, it is largely underdiagnosed. This case report is about a patient with post-viral neuropathic POTS. Neuropathic POTS is believed to be due to the damage of small nerve fibers that regulate the constriction of the blood vessels in the limb and abdomen, which leads to interference with vasoconstriction, and therefore causes tachycardia. Current literature emphasizes a treatment that is based on lifestyle modifications, such as increasing water and salt intake, and symptomatic pharmacological treatment. In this case, the 39-year-old male patient was treated with osteopathic manipulative treatment (OMT), specifically the compression of the fourth ventricle (CV4), which has been associated with the production of hyperparasymphetic and anti-inflammatory effects and, hence, helps overcome the small-fiber neuropathy caused by the viral illness. We found that the CV4 technique led to the successful remission of the patient's symptoms. Therefore, we propose craniosacral therapy as a successful single management modality in patients with POTS.

Introduction

Postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome (POTS) is characterized by an abnormal autonomic nervous system response when a patient goes from a supine to an upright posture, and is a common condition affecting one to three million Americans [1]. In a healthy individual, the autonomic nervous system is activated in order to compensate for the downward displacement of blood [1].

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Comparative Study [Ortop Traumatol Rehabil.](#) 2014 Nov-Dec;16(6):605-15.
doi: 10.5604/15093492.1135120.

Utility of craniosacral therapy in treatment of patients with non-specific low back pain. Preliminary report

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PMID: 25694375 DOI: [10.5604/15093492.1135120](#)

Abstract

Background: Non-specific low back pain is an increasingly common musculoskeletal ailment. The aim of this study was to examine the utility of craniosacral therapy techniques in the treatment of patients with lumbosacral spine overload and to compare its effectiveness to that of trigger point therapy, which is a recognised therapeutic approach.

Material and methods: The study enrolled 55 randomly selected patients (aged 24-47 years) with low back pain due to overload. Other causes of this condition in the patients were ruled out. The participants were again randomly assigned to two groups: patients treated with craniosacral therapy (G-CST) and patients treated with trigger point therapy (G-TPT). Multiple aspects of the effectiveness of both therapies were evaluated with the use of: an analogue scale for pain (VAS) and a modified Laitinen questionnaire, the Schober test and surface electromyography of the multifidus muscle. The statistical analysis of the outcomes was based on the basic statistics, the Mann-Whitney U test and Wilcoxon's signed rank test. The statistical significance level was set at $p \leq 0.05$.

Results: Both groups demonstrated a significant reduction of pain measured with the VAS scale and the Laitinen questionnaire. Moreover, the resting bioelectric activity of the multifidus muscle decreased significantly in the G-CST group. The groups did not differ significantly with regard to the study parameters.

Conclusions: 1. Craniosacral therapy and trigger point therapy may effectively reduce the intensity and frequency of pain in patients with non-specific low back pain. 2. Craniosacral therapy, unlike trigger point therapy, reduces the resting tension of the multifidus muscle in patients with non-specific lumbosacral pain. The mechanism of these changes requires further research. 3. Craniosacral therapy and trigger point therapy may be clinically effective in the treatment of patients with non-specific lumbosacral spine pain. 4. The present findings represent a basis for conducting further and prospective studies of larger and randomized samples.

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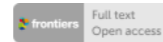
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[Front Hum Neurosci.](#) 2017 Jul 20:11:368. doi: 10.3389/fnhum.2017.00368. eCollection 2017.

Effect of Continuous Touch on Brain Functional Connectivity Is Modified by the Operator's Tactile Attention

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PMID: 28775685 PMCID: [PMC5517483](#) DOI: [10.3389/fnhum.2017.00368](#)

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Abstract

Touch has been always regarded as a powerful communication channel playing a key role in governing our emotional wellbeing and possibly perception of self. Several studies demonstrated that the stimulation of C-tactile afferent fibers, essential neuroanatomical elements of affective touch, activates specific brain areas and the activation pattern is influenced by subject's attention. However, no research has investigated how the cognitive status of who is administering the touch produces changes in brain functional connectivity of touched subjects. In this functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) study, we investigated brain connectivity while subjects were receiving a static touch by an operator engaged in either a tactile attention or auditory attention task. This randomized-controlled single-blinded study enrolled 40 healthy right-handed adults and randomly assigned to either the operator tactile attention (OTA) or the operator auditory attention (OAA) group. During the five fMRI resting-state runs, the touch was delivered while the operator focused his attention either: (i) on the tactile perception from his hands (OTA group); or (ii) on a repeated auditory stimulus (OAA group). Functional connectivity analysis revealed that prolonged sustained static touch applied by an operator engaged with focused tactile attention produced a significant increase of anticorrelation between posterior cingulate cortex (PCC-seed) and right insula (INS) as well as right inferior-frontal gyrus but these functional connectivity changes are markedly different only after 15 min of touching across the OTA and OAA conditions. Interestingly, data also showed anticorrelation between PCC and left INS with a distinct pattern over time. Indeed, the PCC-left INS anticorrelation is showed to start and end earlier compared to that of PCC-right INS. Taken together, the results of this study showed that if a particular cognitive status of the operator is sustained over time, it is able to elicit significant effects on the subjects' functional connectivity patterns involving cortical areas processing the interoceptive and attentional value of touch.

Keywords: affective touch; fMRI; insula; osteopathic manipulative treatment; tactile stimuli.

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Figures

Feasibility and Efficacy of Craniosacral Therapy on Sleep Quality in Fibromyalgia Syndrome: a Pre-Post Pilot Trial

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<https://doi.org/10.3822/ijtmb.v16i2.819>

Background: Sleep disturbance is one of the key symptoms of fibromyalgia syndrome (FMS), which negatively affects the participants' quality of life. Craniosacral therapy (CST) is a gentle manual technique found to have significant effects on pain and function in chronic pain participants. However, limited evidence exists on its effectiveness on sleep quality in FMS participants.

Purpose: To evaluate the feasibility and effectiveness of CST on sleep quality in FMS participants.

Setting: Outpatient physiotherapy department of a hospital in Bangalore.

Participants: Participants diagnosed with FMS.

Research Design: A pre/post pilot trial.

Intervention: Once weekly, 45-minute sessions of CST for 12 weeks. The participants continued the standard medical care prescribed by the physician.

Main Outcome Measure: The sleep quality was evaluated using Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI) at baseline and 12 weeks. The data analysis was carried out using paired *t* test.

Results: 9 out of 10 included participants completed the treatment and were included for analysis. The results of the paired *t* test showed significant improvement in the global PSQI score ($p = .001$, mean difference = 5.44 ± 3.28 , 95% CI = 2.92-7.97), as well as the 5 components of PSQI ($p < .05$).

Conclusion: CST was feasible to deliver with high retention, acceptability, and

minimal adverse events. It significantly improved sleep quality in FMS participants along with standard medical care. However, future studies with larger sample sizes and appropriate control groups are required to confirm the findings.

KEYWORDS: chronic pain; complementary therapies; craniosacral massage; fibromyalgia; sleep

INTRODUCTION

Fibromyalgia syndrome (FMS) is a chronic disorder with pain in at least 4 out of 5 regions of the body along with somatic symptoms such as fatigue, waking up unrefreshed, and difficulties in cognition.⁽¹⁾ It is prevalent among 2.7% of the global population.⁽²⁾ Sleep impairment is one of the core symptoms in FMS participants, which impairs the health-related quality of life.^(3,4) Poor sleep is seen in 90% of FMS participants.^(5,6) The FMS participants commonly complain of difficulty initiating or maintaining sleep, reduced total sleep time, multiple awakenings at night, feeling unrefreshed and tired on waking up, and lack of deep sleep.^(5,7) The objective features of impaired sleep include deprived "slow-wave sleep (SWS)", dominant alpha frequency in "non-rapid eye movement (NREM) sleep", extended "sleep latency", and recurrent switches between sleep phases. It is found that the disruption of synaptic transmission during impaired



NeuroView

Brain rhythms have come of age

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Neuronal oscillations offer access to neuronal operations, bringing microscopic and macroscopic mechanisms, experimental methods, and explanations to a common platform. The field of brain rhythms has become the agora of discussions from temporal coordination of neuronal populations within and across brain regions to cognitive phenomena, including language and brain diseases.

Introduction

Studies of neuronal oscillations are as old as neuroscience itself. Yet, in-depth inquiry of neuronal oscillations had its earnest start only three decades ago. This pivotal change was mainly due to works that focused on the neuronal spike content of the various rhythms, their biophysical and circuit mechanisms, and drug responsiveness, which provided a link to circuit functions and, in turn, to cognitive phenomena. This mesoscopic link created a new platform, the field of “neuronal oscillations,” which has become one of the fastest growing disciplines in neuroscience, and allowed for a fruitful conversation between cellular and network neuroscience on the one hand and cognitive, neurology, and psychiatry on the other. The term “brain rhythm” has become a household word beyond neuroscience. Our community has moved from the early critical questions (“Do oscillations exist?” or “Do network oscillations assist brain computation?”) to “how” neuronal oscillations contribute to circuit operations and behavior.¹ Now it is time to relate current major challenges of contemporary neuroscience to brain rhythms.

The new problem: Time is neuronal space in the brain

Simultaneity of two (or more) events may be deemed synchronous (i.e., occurring within a defined time interval of an observer) even if the two events occur at vastly different times. For example, action potentials arriving at the same time onto the dendrite of a reader neuron from a nearby and distant neuron exert a cooperative impact

on discharge of the reader (target) neuron, even though the spikes in the two upstream neurons were generated tens of milliseconds apart (Figure 1A). Conversely, action potentials that are generated at the same (clock) time in a nearby and distant neuron will arrive to the reader neuron tens of milliseconds apart (i.e., asynchronously; Figure 1B). This observer- or reader-defined synchrony is critical in brain operations. If the action potentials from many upstream neurons arrive within the membrane time constant of the target (reader) neuron (τ : 10–50 ms for a typical pyramidal neuron), their combined action is cooperative because each of them contributes to the discharge of the reader neuron. Action potentials arriving later can only contribute to initiating another action potential. Thus, from the reader neuron’s point of view, upstream partners that contribute to its spike discharge constitute a functional assembly (integrated by the membrane time constant), whereas spikes outside this time window can only be part of another assembly.² This simple functional measure can thus both integrate and segregate upstream neurons into discrete assemblies, irrespective of whether they are interconnected or not. The entire goal of synchronous cooperation is to have an impact, i.e., trigger an action potential in target neurons. Neurons that achieve this joint impact can be considered as a fundamental assembly. When the reader mechanism can integrate over longer time scales (e.g., NMDA channels or neuronal circuits), several fundamental assemblies can be concatenated.

This reader-centric view becomes of utmost importance when one wants to understand communication across brain regions, such as the hippocampus and neocortex (Figure 1C). Because of the slow communication across neurons via the relatively slow conducting axons and charge time of the neuronal membrane, computation and messaging are not instant but protracted over time. This slow propagation of the activity within and across networks is reflected at the mesoscopic level as “traveling waves.”⁴ For example, population activity travels from the dorsal to the ventral pole of the hippocampus in half a theta cycle (~70 ms; Figure 1C). Therefore, the question that arises when the entire hippocampus takes part in a particular computation is: how does the neocortical reader integrate (i.e., decode) neuronal messages from the hippocampus? As is the case in human language communication, where even the last word of the sentence can change the meaning of the sentence, the reader structure should know both the beginning and end of each message—in our example, the spikes from the entire hippocampal volume within 70 ms time frames.

For the messages to *become* information, certain requirements must be in place, of which syntactical rules are most important. We should emphasize that separation of networks into senders and receivers serve only didactic purposes. In the complex networks of the brain, most structures are bidirectionally connected and can serve as both senders and receivers, whose functions can change rapidly by shifting the phases of the sender and receiving partners.





activity of time-overlapping transmembrane potentials, brought about by spike-induced postsynaptic currents (synapsembles), any non-physiological alternation of neuronal assembly coordination can also be recovered from in-depth analysis of LFP patterns. Although detection of epileptic activity from LFP is the most frequently used diagnostic tool, nearly all psychiatric conditions may be characterized by some level of “oscillopathy” or “rhythmopathy.”¹⁰ The relationship between spike assemblies and synapsembles can be also exploited for controlling computers, robots, or other artificial actuators. The advantage of measuring spatially distributed LFP features is their long-term stability compared to multisite recording of single units, which are sensitive to microscopic movements.

Finally, future works in artificial intelligence may exploit oscillatory networks for computation. This may be a win-win outcome because implementation of evolution-tested network operations may

lead to novel predictive-semantic architectures and, in return, may assist neuroscience in discovering generative rules of neuronal patterning, their coding, and decoding abilities.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work was funded by the National Institute of Mental Health R01 (MH122391) and the National Institutes of Health (U19NS107616).

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

G.B. is a member of the *Neuron* advisory board.

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