Chiropractic Management of Fibromyalgia Syndrome

Several nonpharmacological and conservative therapies have acceptable support in literature for treating fibromyalgia syndrome.


BACKGROUND

Fibromyalgia syndrome (FMS) is a condition marked by widespread pain as the main symptom. It is also associated with fatigue, sleep disorders, cognitive deficit, irritable bowel and bladder syndrome, headache and other symptoms. The current trend is to treat FMS symptoms through a variety of interventions, including complementary and alternative (CAM) therapies. Doctors of chiropractic often use therapeutic exercises, vitamins, herbs and dietary modifications to manage FMS.

THE OBJECTIVE of this study was to perform a comprehensive review of and provide evidence ratings for common conservative and nonpharmaceutical therapies used to treat FMS.

THIS STUDY conducted a search of literature through the following major health care databases: Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews; National Guidelines Clearinghouse; Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials; Manual, Alternative and Natural Therapy Index System; Index to Chiropractic Literature; Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature; Allied and Complementary Medicine; and PubMed. The results of the search yielded eight systematic reviews, three meta-analyses, five published guidelines, one consensus document, and an additional 38 articles, all of which were analyzed in detail.

RESULTS

- Strong evidence supports aerobic exercise and cognitive behavioral therapy in the treatment of FMS.
- Massage, muscle strength training, acupuncture and spa therapy (balneotherapy) are supported by moderate evidence.
- Limited evidence supports spinal manipulation, movement/body awareness, vitamins, herbs and dietary modification for treating FMS.
- Treating FMS through combinations of therapies seems to be most helpful.

CAVEATS

More high-quality experimental research studies on chiropractic management of FMS are needed.

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The research described in this column comes from credible, peer-reviewed journals. It is intended to serve as a resource for practitioners and patients to assist them in consideration of various health care options and does not replace clinical judgment.