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Comparison of two different techniques of electrotherapy on myofascial pain

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Abstract

This study was designed to compare the effects of Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation (TENS) and Electrical Muscle Stimulation (EMS) on myofascial trigger point (MTrP) of the upper trapezius muscle. A total of 40 patients were randomly divided into three groups. All patients had active MTrP in one side of the upper trapezius muscles. Group I was treated with TENS and trapezius-stretching exercises; Group II was treated with EMS and trapezius-stretching exercises and Group III, the control group, had only trapezius-stretching exercises. Subjective pain intensity with VAS, range of motion (ROM), and pain threshold (PT) were assessed before, immediately after two week treatment and 3 months after treatment. Group I had a statistically significant reduction in VAS ($P < 0.01$), increase in PT and ROM ($p < 0.05$) at end of the treatment when compared with the control group. Only VAS was significantly improved ($p < 0.05$) in the Group II patients. At the end of the third month, both groups showed highly significant improvement ($p < 0.01$) in VAS and PT (but not ROM). There was no statistical difference in none of parameters between EMS and TENS groups in any time ($p > 0.05$). In conclusion, TENS seem to be more effective immediately after treatment but in long term evaluation there is no significant superiority of two electrotherapy techniques on each other.

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