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Successful management of sciatica patients with one level prolapsed intervertebral disc treated solely by low level laser therapy

David I P

Wellness Pain Centre, Hong Kong

Objective: To study the clinical efficacy of isolated low level laser therapy (LLLТ) treatment inducing clinical remission of new patients suffering from sciatica due to one level intervertebral disc prolapse.

Materials & methods: A prospective clinical study spanning 2014 to 2017 of 30 consecutive patients visiting digital healthcare pain centre with MRI proven single level inter vertebral disc prolapse without cauda equina syndrome. Gaia semiconductor lasers were used with 5.4 J per point and a power density of 20 mw/cm² and irradiation of the axial skeleton of the affected level for 360 seconds, followed by irradiation of the affected dermatome using scanning mode for another 240 seconds. Failure being defined as break through pain which requiring surgery. No other form of physiotherapy treatment like traction was being administered. All subjects refused the use of sham light source so the study cannot be placebo controlled. Visual analogue scale (VAS) of pain was used to monitor pain level.

Results: The male: female ratio was 1:2, the mean age was 37 (range 29 to 48), the right lower limb was affected in 33 percent of cases, there were no defaulters. All patients received three sessions per week for 12 weeks. None of the patients required operative intervention. All 30 patients achieved clinical remission within 12weeks. The mean VAS score upon entry to study was 7 out of 10 and the mean VAS score upon completion of study was 2 out of 10 (p<0.5).

Conclusion: Isolated use of LLLТ is highly effective in managing sciatica due to one level intervertebral disc prolapse.

lpdavid@hotmail.com.hk