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Original Research Article

Fear of needles does not influence pain tolerance and sympathetic responses among patients during a therapeutic needling

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Dry needling is one of the therapies employed in pain medicine to reduce pain. However, no clear understanding exists as to whether there are differences in pain tolerance levels and sympathetic responses among individuals who have a fear of needles when compared to those who do not fear needling during dry needling treatment.

Aim: The main aim of this study was to investigate the differences in the pain pressure threshold and sympathetic changes among individuals who fear needling and those who do not fear needling during a sham dry needling procedure over a latent trigger point on the upper trapezius.

Material and methods: A cross sectional study was conducted in the Physiotherapy Outpatient Clinic at the University Teaching Hospital among 27 healthy subjects (12 subjects with needle phobia and 15 subjects with no fear of needles). Pain pressure threshold, blood pressure and heart rate were measured before and after the sham needling. The differences in the study variables between and within the groups were analysed using a 2-way ANOVA.

Results: The results indicated no significant differences in pain pressure threshold ($P > .05$), blood pressure ($P > .05$) and heart rate ($P > .05$) between and within the two groups. However, the mean ($\pm$ SD) value of pain pressure threshold showed an increased trend among those subjects with a fear of needles when compared to subjects who do not fear needling, -3.12 (± 1.20) and 2.97 (± 0.85), respectively.

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