Research informing practice

REHAB DIRECT

Efficacy of Manual Therapy on Shoulder Pain and Function in Patients with a Rotator Cuff Injury

Combining manual therapy with exercise leads to greater improvements in shoulder pain than exercise alone

Context

To critically evaluate the effects of manual therapy (MT):

- When used alone versus placebo.
- When used in combination with exercise versus exercise alone.
- When used in combination with multimodal physiotherapy versus multimodal physiotherapy alone.

Methods

Sample: 24 RCTs, 1,110 participants.

Data sources: Nine databases including PubMed, Embase, Cochrane and PEDro, were searched.

Eligibility: RCTs involving adults with rotator cuff–related diagnoses.

Interventions:

- MT vs placebo
- MT & exercise vs exercise alone
- MT & multimodal physiotherapy vs multimodal physiotherapy alone

Outcomes: Pain (VAS, NPRS) and function utilising appropriate questionnaire

Results

MT vs Placebo:

- No improvement in pain or function with MT or placebo alone.
- Multiple MT sessions showed greater pain reduction than single sessions.

MT & Exercise vs Exercise alone:

- Adding MT to exercise resulted in significantly greater pain reduction than exercise alone.
- MT combined with exercise led to greater functional improvement than exercise alone.

MT & multimodal physiotherapy vs Multimodal physiotherapy alone:

- MT added to multimodal physiotherapy produced greater pain reduction than multimodal physiotherapy alone.
- MT plus multimodal physiotherapy resulted in substantially greater functional improvement than multimodal physiotherapy alone.

Reference

Liu, S., Chen, L., Shi, Q., Fang, Y., Da, W., Xue, C., & Li, X. (2024). *Efficacy of manual therapy on shoulder pain and function in patients with rotator cuff injury: A systematic review and meta-analysis.* Biomedical Reports, 20, Article 89.