Topic: Musculoskeletal and joint pain

Title: CHRONIC LOW BACK PAIN: DIAGNOSTIC CLASSIFICATION

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Text: Background and Aims

Spinal injection is used to improve pain and functional outcomes for chronic low back pain (CLBP) patients, while physiotherapists use a variety of assessment protocols to classify patients with chronic low back pain. Most protocols evaluate the patient's response to movement patterns, sustained, repeated or combined movements on pain distribution, intensity and functional restriction.

The aim of this study was to determine the validity of a diagnostic classification system used to direct the application of spinal injection in patients with chronic low back pain.

Methods

All subjects (n=160) had been diagnosed with chronic low back pain and referred to a pain clinic. A physiotherapist and a neurosurgeon examined and classified all subjects. Spinal injection was conducted by a neurosurgeon based on the physiotherapy diagnostic classification. Immediately following spinal injection subjects were reexamined. Data was analysed to identify significant differences in pain levels, quality of life, disability survey outcomes, range of motion and response to repeated or combined movements.

Results

Subjects showed significant improvement in both subjective and objective measures post injection, indicating that this diagnostic classification system for patients with chronic low back pain has validity and potential to improve efficacy of spinal injection for patients with chronic low back pain.

Conclusions

This physiotherapy classification system was a valid diagnostic tool, and when used to direct the application of spinal injection, it led to positive outcomes. This research has implications for the role of physiotherapists in the classification of chronic low back pain prior to spinal injection.

Author Keywords: Chronic Low Back Pain, Physiotherapy, Diagnostic classification