

Studying the Effectiveness of One Type of Iranian Traditional Massage on Lumbar Radiculopathy

Mamak Hashemi¹,
Ali Akbar Jafarian²,
Shahram Tofighi³,
Kamran Mahluji⁴,
Farzin Halabchi⁵

¹Department of Iranian Traditional Medicine, Medicine School, Hamadan University of Medical Sciences, Hamadan, Iran;

²Hazrat-e Rasool General Hospital, Medicine School, Iran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran;

³Department of Health Services Management, Baqiyatallah University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran;

⁴Traditional Medicine School, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran;

⁵Sports Medicine Research Center, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran

Abstract

Background: Low-back pain is one of the most common human morbidities worldwide, which is damaging individually, socially and economically. Recent studies have shown that its prevalence is rising. Most of the low-back pains are non-specific though specific ones need more complicated and more expensive treatments. Sciatica or lumbar radiculopathy is one of these specific low-back pains and is explained in Iranian traditional medicine textbooks in detail. Massage is one of the therapeutic modalities, advised for sciatica. Due to different aspects of sciatica in modern medicine, massage is not indicated as treatment, but it is advised in Iranian traditional medicine. In Iran, many patients resort to traditional massage for sciatica and are satisfied. Thus, the effectiveness of one type of Iranian traditional massage “Kermanshahi family” and conventional treatment were compared based on three outcomes of pain, disability, and quality of life score.

Methods: A total of 50 patients were observed in two groups (25 per group) of case (massage) and control (classic treatment) in a non-randomized controlled clinical trial. Patients suffering from lumbar radicular pain for 8 weeks or longer, before referring to each center (neurosurgery or traditional massage clinic), were enrolled continuously. In the case group, patients underwent traditional massage sessions whereas in the control group they were prescribed as routine. Three outcomes were observed during three periods of before intervention, 1-month, and 3-month after intervention.

Results: The mean difference of pain severity decrease in both groups was meaningful ($P=0/007$). The mean difference of disability decrease in both groups was meaningful ($P=0/003$). However, the mean difference of quality of life increase in both groups was not meaningful.

Conclusion: Iranian traditional massage may be useful for the treatment of non-acute sciatica, but more studies are required to confirm and clarify the protocols.

Keywords • Medicine • Traditional • Musculoskeletal manipulations • Massage