Original article

Can Leech Therapy Be Used as an Alternative Treatment for Controlling Migraine Headache? A Pilot Study

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SUMMARY

Leech therapy is likely to cause symptomatic relief in migraine headache sufferers, but there is little clinical data in this field. This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of leech therapy in the management of migraine headaches.

This is a quasi-experimental pilot study with a three-month post-treatment follow-up. Twenty-six patients with migraine headaches were allocated into two groups to receive either routine drug therapy (Propranolol 80 mg/day and Amytriptyline 50 mg/day) as preventive therapy or leech therapy (1-3 leeches in a single session). The severity and duration of headache were measured before intervention, as well as at week 1, and at months 1, 2, and 3 after intervention. The visual analog scale (VAS) was used to assess the severity of headache.

The mean severity and duration of headaches were significantly decreased within both groups during the study period, whereas there was no significant difference between the groups after three months. The declining trend of severity and duration of headaches was seen to be highly significant in the first week of the treatment in both groups.

The results of this study showed that a single session of leech therapy offers benefits equal to drug therapy in reducing pain in women with migraine headache, and can provide great symptomatic relief, lasting for at least three months.

Key words: leech therapy, drug therapy, migraine headache, clinical trial

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