

PS2.080

Myofascial pain syndrome: management strategies for primary care providers

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Background & Aim: Myofascial pain syndrome (MPS) is a common, painful disorder that is responsible for many pain clinic visits. MPS can affect any skeletal muscles in the body. Trigger points (TrPs), which cause referred pain in characteristic areas for specific muscles, restricted range of motion (ROM), and a visible or palpable local twitch response (LTR) to local stimulation, are classic signs of MPS. They are classified as being active or latent, depending on their clinical characteristics. MPS is responsible for many cases of chronic musculoskeletal pain and the diagnosis is commonly missed. The lack of a clear approach often results in patients being passed from specialist to specialist, prescription of multiple drugs, delays in diagnosis, increased disability and increased healthcare resource utilization. It will be discussed the understanding of MPS, and recommend improvements in the management and treatment of MPS, highlighting the role of the primary care physician.

Method: The epidemiology, pathophysiology and management of MPS were reviewed by searching PubMed and references from relevant articles, and selected articles on the basis of quality, relevance to the illness and importance in illustrating current management pathways.

Results: The implementation of a framework for myofascial pain management in primary care would limit unnecessary, time-consuming, reduce diagnostic delay and improve patient outcomes.

Conclusions: Implementation of a well centred approach would allow patients with MPS, to be successfully managed in the primary care setting.