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Skeletal Muscle Spasms

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Abstract

Objective

Since skeletal muscle spasms are prevalent and can cause moderate to severe pain, the authors created a narrative review to describe the various types of skeletal muscle spasms and their treatment.

Methods

This is a narrative review based on a literature search of clinical trials and randomized clinical trials about “skeletal muscle spasms” from the past 10 years.

Results

Skeletal muscle spasms may be caused by physical conditions (dehydration, overexertion, prolonged exercise) or secondary to a disease or injury (neuropathy, diabetes, stroke, spinal cord injury). Spasms may occur with low back pain as well, a highly prevalent condition. Inflammation is present in many cases and can lead to muscle weakness and increased spasms. Treatment depends on the type of spasm or spasticity and the patient. For example, patients with limited mobility such as those who are wheelchair bound may have different treatment requirements. Spasms are often treated pharmacologically but caution must be exercised with geriatric patients who are not deemed appropriate candidates for muscle relaxants.

Conclusion

Spasms associated with neurodegenerative disorders (upper and lower motor neurons) can be most challenging to treat. Many spasms occur secondary to a disease. Spasticity may occur in patients with stroke, spinal cord injury, multiple sclerosis, cystic fibrosis, or traumatic brain injury. Spasms associated with physical stress can often be treated nonpharmacologically.

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Abstract
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