Non-Organic Motor Disorder: Combatting the Effects of Stress on Functional Mobility

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BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Non-organic motor disorders are common somatoform disorders diagnosed by a physical presentation of symptoms that may present as a neurological disease, with no proof of organic etiology. Disease processes and treatment remain unclear.1-6

The purpose of the case report was to show how neurological symptoms can be effectively treated with task-specific interventions and the role of stress in symptom presentation in patients with somatoform disorders.

CASE DESCRIPTION

Body Structure & Function
- LE spasticity
- Ataxia (all 4 limbs)
- Weak hips
- Decreased LE AROM
- LE myoclonus
- Trunk/axial rigidity
- Difficulty motor planning

Activity
- Impaired balance
- Dysfunctional gait
- Poor bed mobility/transfers
- Transitional movements difficult
- Unable to perform ADLs

Participation
- Community ambulation impossible
- Unable to drive

Biological
- Clean toxicity reports
- Clean MRIs
- Pending genetic reports

Psychological
- Current stress
- Current anxiety
- No depression

Social
- Unknown childhood history of trauma
- Recent divorce
- Potential secondary gain

INTERVENTIONS

Table Exercises:
- Passive stretches
- Strengthening
- Trunk and extremity dissociation

Task-specific exercises with normal movement facilitation:
- Bed mobility and transfers
- Balance
- Gait

OUTCOMES

DISCUSSION

- Functional training improves mobility, decreases fall risk, improves quality of life, enhances voluntary movement control7,8
- Changing fear-avoidance behavior may be beneficial in changing patient’s post-stress symptoms9
- Start therapy at first sign of symptoms to prevent symptom progression8
- Improvements can be seen over a long rehabilitation period versus short-term, intense therapy sessions.

CLINICAL RELEVANCE

The case report suggests that physical therapists, as movement specialists, can improve functional mobility in patients with non-organic motor disorders and decrease neurological symptoms by applying task specific training.

Consideration of a multidisciplinary approach with a psychologist may be an important adjunct to successful physical therapy treatment for addressing the impact of stress.2,3

References: