



THE PSYCHOSOCIAL EFFECTS OF SHORT TERM THERMAL CURE THERAPY IN BURN PATIENTS

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RATIONALE

Although balneotherapy is widely being used as part of the rehabilitation process in different medical conditions, little evidence exists on the benefits of this type of therapy in burns. This study investigates the psychosocial effects of a short term thermal cure therapy in burn-injured patients.

METHODS

Fourteen burn patients (10 men and 4 women) between 18 and 56 years of age (mean 36.2 ± 10.7 years) followed a thermal cure therapy during three weeks in a thermal cure station in Avène (France).

Patients were recruited from different Belgian burn centers. Informed consent was obtained from all patients.

Psychosocial interventions like workshops on maquillage, hydration & itching, and other information sessions were offered to the patients.



Health-related quality of life questionnaires measuring depression and anxiety (Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale), general (EuroQol EQ-5D) and burn-related (Burn Specific Health Scale) QOL, post traumatic stress symptoms (Impact of Event Scale) and coping styles (Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire) were filled in at different time points.

All these parameters were obtained at baseline, during the intervention, and at follow-up two weeks and three months after the end of therapy. Friedman tests were used for detection of any change and paired Wilcoxon tests were used for the change observed three months after end of therapy compared to baseline.

RESULTS

• The results reveal a positive long-term effect of therapy for general health status for the total group and more particularly for women (Fig 1).

It seems that the therapy has an important positive effect on pain relief and depressive thoughts (Fig 2). These positive effects are also observed long after therapy in women and people with non-visible scars.

• Therapy seems to have no impact on PTSD symptoms in general and on self esteem.

• In men and people with visible scars the therapy seems to have a negative effect on the coping strategies rumination and putting things into perspective shortly after therapy as well as 3 months later. Furthermore, a negative impact of therapy can be observed on acceptance and catastrophizing in men and people with visible scars. The results, therefore, seem to suggest that people during and especially after therapy more frequently use negative coping strategies.

Fig. 1 EuroQOL EQ-5D: General health status

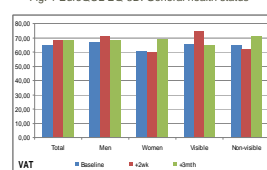
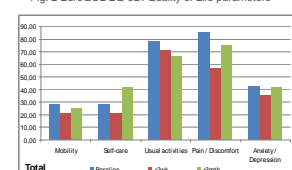


Fig. 2 EuroQOL EQ-5D: Quality of Life parameters



CONCLUSION

This study reveals a positive impact of the therapy on general health status and a reduction of pain and depressive feelings. Further studies are needed to better identify which parameters most benefit from this therapy.

Acknowledgements

This study was financially supported by the Belgian Burns Foundation and Avène

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