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Letter to Editor

The psychomotor approach: An innovative strategy for managing chronic neck pain

Alagappan Thiyagarajan¹, Thangamani Ramalingam^{1b,2*}, Oves Patni³,
Rajan Balakrihsnan⁴, S Jeyakumar⁵

¹Dept. of Physiotherapy, Chettinad Academy of Research and Education, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

²Dept. of Physiotherapy, Veer Narmad South Gujarat University, Surat, Gujarat, India

³Sarvajani College of Physiotherapy, Surat, Gujarat, India

⁴Mahsa University, Selangor, Malaysia

⁵Garden City University, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India



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ABSTRACT

Chronic neck pain is a prevalent condition that significantly impacts individuals' quality of life. Traditional treatments often yield limited long-term benefits, necessitating innovative approaches. The psychomotor approach integrates cognitive, emotional, and physical elements to address chronic pain effectively. This paper explores key components of the psychomotor approach, including mindfulness-based movement, Graded Motor Imagery (GMI), Cognitive Functional Therapy (CFT), movement variability, and relaxation techniques. Each method contributes to a holistic treatment strategy that not only alleviates pain but also fosters a deeper understanding of bodily sensations and promotes active participation in recovery. Although preliminary evidence suggests the potential effectiveness of this approach, further research through randomized controlled trials (RCTs) and case studies is crucial to validate its efficacy and enhance treatment protocols. This paper advocates for increased focus on psychomotor strategies in clinical practice to improve outcomes for individuals suffering from chronic neck pain.

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1. Introduction

Chronic neck pain is a prevalent condition impacting millions globally, significantly hindering daily activities and overall quality of life. Its causes range from poor posture and stress to injuries and underlying medical issues. Traditional treatments like medication, physical therapy, and surgery often provide inadequate relief, highlighting the need for innovative approaches. The psychomotor approach emerges as a promising strategy by integrating cognitive, emotional, and physical dimensions in pain management. This multifaceted method aims not only to alleviate pain but also to empower patients to manage their condition actively.

By fostering body awareness, movement variability, and cognitive restructuring, this approach addresses the intricate interplay of physical and psychological factors contributing to chronic pain.

This paper provides an overview of the psychomotor approach, detailing its components, benefits, and the necessity for further research to confirm its efficacy, ultimately aiming to enhance treatment outcomes for those suffering from chronic neck pain.¹

2. The Psychomotor Approach: An Overview

The psychomotor approach is a holistic treatment strategy recognizing that chronic pain encompasses both physical

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: alagappanphd@gmail.com (T. Ramalingam).

and psychological dimensions. It incorporates mindfulness-based movement practices, such as yoga and mindful stretching, which enhance flexibility, strength, and body awareness. These techniques encourage patients to engage with their bodies, identify areas of tension, and consciously release muscle tightness, thereby altering pain perception and promoting emotional well-being.

The approach also includes Graded Motor Imagery (GMI) and Cognitive Functional Therapy (CFT). GMI retrains the brain's pain response through gradual exposure techniques, while CFT addresses cognitive distortions, helping patients challenge negative beliefs about pain and gradually reintroduce feared movements. Additionally, relaxation techniques like diaphragmatic breathing and progressive muscle relaxation further enhance the therapeutic experience by promoting calmness and reducing muscle tension.^{2,3}

2.1. Key Components of the psychomotor approach

1. **Mindfulness-Based Movement:** Practices like yoga and mindful stretching enhance body awareness and facilitate relaxation. These methods improve flexibility and reduce pain, making them essential for healing.
2. **Graded Motor Imagery (GMI):** GMI retrains the brain's response to pain through gradual exposure to movement, starting with laterality training to stimulate motor areas without pain. Subsequent phases involve imagined movements and mirror therapy to desensitize the painful area.
3. **Cognitive Functional Therapy (CFT):** CFT targets cognitive distortions related to chronic pain, encouraging patients to reframe negative thought patterns and gradually engage in feared movements. This promotes a positive mindset and equips patients with coping strategies.
4. **Movement Variability:** Emphasizing movement variability helps break rigid patterns that can exacerbate pain. By encouraging varied movements, therapists can enhance neuromuscular control and boost confidence in physical abilities.
5. **Relaxation Techniques:** Techniques like diaphragmatic breathing and progressive muscle relaxation activate the parasympathetic nervous system, aiding muscle relaxation and reducing pain.^{4,5}

3. Discussion

The psychomotor approach offers a promising strategy for chronic neck pain by integrating physical, cognitive, and emotional elements. While preliminary evidence supports components like mindfulness-based movement and GMI,

further research is necessary. Randomized controlled trials (RCTs) and case studies focusing on this approach are essential for validating its benefits and refining treatment protocols. Recognizing the multifaceted nature of chronic pain is vital, as it involves psychological, social, and environmental factors. Future studies should explore long-term effects on pain management and overall quality of life. By investing in the psychomotor approach, we can address the complexities of chronic neck pain and improve patient outcomes.⁶

4. Conclusion

The psychomotor approach provides a holistic framework for managing chronic neck pain by integrating cognitive, emotional, and physical aspects. Key components like mindfulness-based movement, GMI, CFT, movement variability, and relaxation techniques equip patients with effective pain management tools. However, further research is crucial to establish its efficacy and refine treatment protocols. As our understanding of chronic pain evolves, prioritizing innovative strategies like the psychomotor approach can enhance treatment outcomes and improve the quality of life for individuals suffering from chronic neck pain.

5. Source of Funding

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6. Conflict of Interest


None.

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Author's biography

Alagappan Thiyagarajan, Associate Professor cum Chief Physiotherapist

Thangamani Ramalingam, Lecturer  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7429-1718>

Oves Patni, Faculty

Rajan Balakrihsnan, Lecturer

S Jeyakumar, Professor and Research Supervisor

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