Trans-anal irrigation in functional bowel disorders- a new role?

Hypothesis/Aims of Study

• Trans-anal irrigation (TAI) was developed to treat patients with neurogenic bowel dysfunction. It is now being used increasingly in the treatment of functional bowel disorders but published data is scarce.
• We have been using TAI in our clinic for 9 years. TAI is considered when other less invasive treatment modalities have failed.
• Our study aims to determine whether TAI improves symptoms in patients presenting with functional bowel disorders with corresponding improvements in quality of life and whether there are differences in the delivery of the TAI between three functional bowel disorders.

Study design, materials and methods

• A total of 197 patients with functional bowel symptoms were identified who had commenced TAI and had used it for at least 12 weeks.
• A postal questionnaire was sent to each patient to determine if they were still using TAI and if so the frequency, water volume and a pre and post symptom score were recorded.
• Symptoms were measured using the validated Visual Analogue Scale (VAS) scoring system on a scale of 0-10, where 0 represents no symptoms and 10 represents the maximum severity of symptoms.

Results

• One hundred and seventy six patients responded to the questionnaire, 24 male and 152 female (89% response rate).
• One hundred and twenty two patients were still using irrigation (69%): 61 had symptoms of constipation; 35 had symptoms of obstructed defecation; 26 had faecal incontinence.
• The median VAS score pre-treatment was 10; the median VAS score post treatment was 4. There is strong evidence that the before and after scores differ for those patients still using irrigation (p< 0.0001).
• In the group still using TAI, the median number of days per week that TAI was used was 7 and the mean amount of water used was 773 mls.

Table of Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>constipation</th>
<th>faecal incontinence</th>
<th>faecal obstruction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-VAS score</td>
<td>10 (8-10)</td>
<td>9 (8-10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-VAS score</td>
<td>5 (3-6)</td>
<td>7 (4-7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Days using TAI</td>
<td>7 (4-7)</td>
<td>7 (4-7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of water used</td>
<td>900 (600-1000)</td>
<td>700 (600-1000)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graph to show number of days irrigation used

Graph to show amount of water used

Diagram to demonstrate changes in VAS scores

Reasons for discontinuation

• Fifty four patients had discontinued using TAI, reasons for discontinuation were recorded.
• Ten had stopped due to rectal/anal pain.
• One had stopped due to rectal bleeding.
• Three had stopped due to anal leakage after TAI.
• Twenty One had stopped due to TAI not helping their symptoms.
• Three had stopped due to problems with the balloon.
• Eleven had stopped but did not give a reason.

Concluding Message

• Further research is needed to identify clinical criteria to guide patient selection and predictors of success in patients presenting with functional bowel symptoms.

Patient comments

• Since using the irrigation I can now go out with comfort knowing I won't be embarrassed by leakage.
• It has changed my life. I was more or less housebound previously. Now I have my social life back.
• Irrigation worked for me. I couldn't cope without it.
• On most occasions it works very well. I would be lost without it.
• I feel more empty using this system and it is a good addition to my bowel management.
• Irrigation has been a great help to me even though I only use it when I'm bordering on hospital admission; it has been a really beneficial and reassuring treatment.
• Using irrigation has changed my daily life. I can eat and drink more after using it. Also I have less nausea, bloating and discomfort.
• Gaining weight happily. Peristeen has changed my life.
• I don't suffer with constipation anymore and don't have accidents at work. If going out in the evening I use it later in the day.

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