



Characterization of facial pain in individuals with hemifacial spasm

Miriam Carvalho Soares¹, Mariana de Almeida Cruz Silva², João Augusto de Macedo Cavalcanti de Albuquerque², Clélia Maria Ribeiro Franco^{1,3}, Pedro Augusto Sampaio Rocha Filho^{1,3}

¹Clinical Hospital, Federal University of Pernambuco, Recife, Pernambuco, Brazil

²Center for Medical Sciences, Federal University of Pernambuco, Recife, Pernambuco, Brazil

³Oswaldo Cruz University Hospital, Recife, Pernambuco, Brazil

Background

Hemifacial spasm (HFS) is defined by involuntary facial contractions. Facial pain associated with HFS is observed in practice, although there is still little research on the subject.

Objective

To characterize facial pain in HFS patients and to analyze if pain was associated with clinical spasm severity, quality of life (QoL), anxiety, depression and insomnia.

Methods

Cross-sectional study involving 59 patients of a public hospital. Cognitive impairment, use of botulinum toxin in the last three months and other movement disorders were exclusion criteria. Data were obtained using the following instruments: sociodemographic questionnaire; structured questionnaire of facial pain characteristics (intensity in a visual analog scale: VAS, frequency, location); McGill pain questionnaire; hemifacial spasm grading questionnaire (HFS-Score) for clinical severity and QoL; hospital anxiety and depression scale (HADS); and insomnia severity index (ISI).

Results

Among 59 patients, 39 (66.1%) were female and mean age was 65.9 years (SD: 12.9). Average diagnosis time was 15.5 years (SD: 8.5) and time to pain onset was 5.5 years (IQR: 15.7). Most common spasm side was left: 36 patients (61%). 26 patients (44.1%) reported facial pain, mean intensity was 6.1 (SD: 2) in VAS and frequency of 5 (IQR: 12) days/month. The facial pain locations were: periorbital in 21 cases (80.7%), maxillary in 5 (19.2%) and mandibular in 2 (7.6%). Auricular and whole hemiface were mentioned in 1 case (3.8%) each. 25 patients (96.1%) described pain ipsilaterally to spasm, and 1 (3.9%) described pain bilaterally. Most common descriptors for pain were: pulling (11 patients), itchy (10 patients) and annoying (10 patients). Association between facial pain and worse QoL was found (p : 0.038; Mann-Whitney test). Facial pain was also related to insomnia (p : 0.037; Fisher exact test). No association was found between facial pain and clinical spasm severity, age, anxiety or depression.

Conclusion

Facial pain is common in patients with hemifacial spasm and generally occurs on the same side, is moderate in intensity and is associated with a worse quality of life and insomnia.