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New Concepts in the Management of "Repetitive Stress Injury" and "Carpal Tunnel Syndrome" by a New Treatment Modality Using the Low Power Laser

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Abstract

Female office workers with desk jobs who are incapacitated by pain and tingling in the hands and fingers are often diagnosed by physicians as "repetitive stress injury" or "carpal tunnel syndrome". These patients usually have poor posture with their head and neck stooped and forward and shoulders rounded; upon palpation, they have pain and tenderness at the spinous processes C5-T1 and the medial angle of the scapula. In 35 such patients we focused the treatment primarily at the posterior neck area and not the wrist and hands. A low power laser (100 mW) was used and directed at the tips of the spinous processes C5-T1 based upon the principles and techniques of Wong et. al. The laser rapidly alleviated the pain and tingling in the arms, hands and fingers, and diminished tenderness at the involved spinous processes. Thereby, it has become apparent that many patients labelled as having "repetitive stress injury" or "carpal tunnel syndrome" have predominantly cervical radicular dysfunction resulting in pain to the upper extremities which can be managed by the low power laser. Successful long-term management involves treating the soft tissue lesions in the neck combined with correcting the abnormal head, neck and shoulder posture by taping, cervical collars and clavicle harnesses as well as improved work ergonomics.