Safety and efficacy of Scrambler therapy for cancer pain.

Abstract:
Background: Chronic cancer pain (CCP) is present in 50% of cancer patients at any stage of disease and in 70% of those in an advanced setting. Preliminary results have shown the effectiveness of Scrambler therapy, which uses electroanalgesia to neuromodulate cancer-related neuropathic pain. The Scrambler machine is supported by a multiprocessor computer capable of simulating 5 artificial neurons that send out signals identified by the central nervous system as "no pain." In this way the Scrambler information can be conveyed through electrodes to nerve fibres involved in the production or transmission of the pain signal. Methods: Two consecutive weeks of treatment (one treatment per day lasting 30 minutes, 5 days a week) (T1, T2) are normally given followed by weekly follow-up for a further 2 weeks (T3, T4). Patients are asked to describe their current level of pain in a VAS questionnaire immediately before starting treatment and after each 30-minute session. In this way the Scrambler information can be conveyed through electrodes to nerve fibres involved in the production or transmission of the pain signal. Results: Preliminary analysis of pain intensity showed a decrease from an average of 4.7 (SD 2.9) baseline to 2.5 (SD 2.3) at the end of the second week of treatment (T2) and 2.6 (SD 2.6) at the end of the second week of follow-up (T4). Conclusions: Our preliminary results indicate the potential effectiveness of Scrambler therapy for pain control in patients with advanced cancer. It is now planned to extend the study to compare Scrambler therapy with placebo treatment.
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