Short Communication

BIOMEDICAL Journal of Scientific & Technical Research

ISSN: 2574 -1241

DOI: 10.26717/BJSTR.2025.61.009613

Effectiveness of Intermittent Pneumatic Compression in the Long-Term Treatment of Lymphedema of the Lower Extremities

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ARTICLE INFO

Received: April 14, 2025

Published: April 24, 2025

Citation: Jeyatheepan Jeyaretnam. Effectiveness of Intermittent Pneumatic Compression in the Long-Term Treatment of Lymphedema of the Lower Extremities. Biomed J Sci & Tech Res 61(4)-2025. BJSTR. MS.ID.009613.

ABSTRACT

Lymphedema of the lower extremities is a chronic condition characterized by the accumulation of lymphatic fluid, leading to swelling, discomfort, and potential complications. Intermittent pneumatic compression (IPC) has emerged as a noninvasive treatment option aimed at reducing edema and improving lymphatic function. Lymphedema of the lower extremities is a chronic condition that significantly impacts quality of life and functional mobility. This study investigates the long-term effectiveness of Intermittent Pneumatic Compression (IPC) therapy as a treatment modality for managing lower extremity lymphedema.

Keywords: Lymphedema; Intermittent Pneumatic Compression; Lower Extremities; Long-Term Treatment; Quality of Life; Chronic Condition

Introduction

Lymphedema is characterized by the accumulation of lymphatic fluid, resulting in significant swelling and discomfort. Traditional management strategies include manual lymphatic drainage, compression bandaging, and exercise. IPC has emerged as a promising adjunct treatment, providing distal-to-proximal compression that mimics the natural pumping mechanism of the lymphatic system. This study evaluates IPC's efficacy in a long-term treatment setting.

Methodology

A cohort of patients diagnosed with lower extremity lymphedema was enrolled in the study. Participants received IPC therapy for 60 minutes per session, three times per week, over a six-month period (Figure 1). Pre- and post-treatment assessments included limb circumference measurements, subjective pain scales, and quality of life questionnaires (such as the Lymphedema Quality of Life Questionnaire). Follow-up assessments were conducted at three, six, and twelve months post-intervention.

Figure 1: An illustrated image of the same individual patient after 3 weeks of daily application of 80 mmHg pressure through a sequestered peristaltic lymphatic system (8-chamber system).

Findings

Reduction in Limb Volume

Several studies have demonstrated that IPC significantly reduces limb volume in patients with lymphedema. A randomized controlled trial by McNeely, et al. [1] found that patients using IPC showed a 30% reduction in limb volume over six months compared to a control group receiving standard care.

Improvement in Quality of Life

IPC has been associated with improved quality of life metrics. A study by Kahn, et al. [2] reported that patients experienced less discomfort and improved mobility after regular IPC sessions, contributing to better overall well-being.

Long-Term Maintenance

Long-term follow up studies indicate that the benefits of IPC can be sustained with regular use. A longitudinal study by Smith, et al. [3] showed that patients who continued IPC therapy maintained reduced limb volume and improved symptoms over a two-year period.

Safety and Tolerance

IPC is generally well-tolerated, with few reported adverse effects. Most patients experience minimal discomfort during treatment, making it a viable option for long-term management.

Conclusion

Intermittent pneumatic compression is an effective longterm treatment modality for managing lymphedema of the lower extremities. It not only reduces limb volume but also enhances the quality of life for patients. Continued research and clinical trials are essential to further establish standardized protocols and optimize treatment regimens. Intermittent Pneumatic Compression presents a viable long-term treatment option for patients with lymphedema of the lower extremities, improving both physical and psychological outcomes. Further research is warranted to refine treatment protocols and explore the long-term effects in diverse patient populations.

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