Can Change in Stress Level and Dietary Habits Significantly Improve the Symptoms of Fibromyalgia in Males? A Case Report

Ference T*, Casella G and Gomez M
Department of Rehabilitation Medicine, University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, USA

*Corresponding author: Tamar Ference MD, Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, Florida, USA, Tel: 305-243-4588; Fax: 305-243-4650; E-mail: t.ference@med.miami.edu

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Abstract
We report a male patient with fibromyalgia that significantly improved pain and associated symptoms without medication, physical therapy or psychotherapy. Psychological stress has been implicated in the origin of fibromyalgia and avoidance of stress may be pivotal to its treatment. There are no conclusive studies demonstrating the beneficial effects of diet to treat fibromyalgia, however some reports associated dietary excitotoxins, coenzyme Q10 deficiency, and aspartame ingestion with fibromyalgia and that certain diets such as anti-inflammatory, vegan and leaky-gut diet may ameliorate fibromyalgia symptoms. The pronounced improvement in this patient’s symptoms was obtained by associating stress avoidance and diet changes. The improvement in the pain levels allowed him to engage in a regular exercise program that may have further contributed to the treatment without the need of medication or psychotherapy.

Keywords: Fibromyalgia; Stress; Diet

Introduction
Psychological stress has been implicated in the origin of fibromyalgia and avoidance of stress may be pivotal to its treatment [1]. There are no conclusive studies demonstrating the beneficial effects of diets to treat fibromyalgia [2,3], however some reports associated dietary excitotoxins [4], coenzyme Q10 deficiency [5], and aspartame ingestion [4,6] with fibromyalgia and that certain diets such as vegan [7] and leaky-gut diet [8] may ameliorate fibromyalgia symptoms.

We present a case of fibromyalgia in a 44 year old male that significantly improved his symptoms after dramatically changing his stress level and diet composition.

Case description
44 year old male who was a triathlete and a paramedic for 8 years, presented with symptoms of severe generalized pain, fatigue, anxiety, depression, memory impairment and sleep disturbances. Significant functional impairment forced him to dramatically decrease his activity level and be assigned to light duty at work, which decreased his daily stress level. He had physical therapy without improvement. He also started a diet with no dairy products, no gluten, no processed foods, low in carbohydrates and rich in lean proteins. He was occasionally taking tramadol for pain. He received no other treatment for his fibromyalgia [9].

Two months after changing his stress level and diet, he noticed a significant improvement in the pain and fatigue. His pain now is 3/10, his sleep has improved and the fatigue has resolved to the point that he now runs 5 miles a day (Figure 1).

Discussion

We report a male patient with fibromyalgia that was able to significantly improve pain, fatigue and sleep without medication, physical therapy or psychotherapy.

The pronounced improvement in this patient’s symptoms was obtained by stress reduction and diet changes. The improvement in the pain level allowed him to engage in a regular exercise program that...
may have further contributed to his healing without the need for medication or psychotherapy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diet description</th>
<th>Study and Result</th>
<th>Reference</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vegan diets</td>
<td>33 patients showed a significant decrease in self-reported morning stiffness and pain at rest compared with controls after 3 months.</td>
<td>Hanninen, et al. [11]</td>
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<td>18 patients improved in scores at Fibromyalgia Impact Questionnaire, SF-36, quality of life survey, shoulder pain, flexibility, and 6-minute walk test after 7-months.</td>
<td>Donaldson MS, et al. [12]</td>
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<td>51 self-selected patients in treatment or control groups. Treatment group patients were asked to exclude foods to which a lymphocyte response assay was used to determine food sensitivities. There was less pain, depression, fatigue, and stiffness after 3 months compared with baseline.</td>
<td>Deuster PA, et al. [14]</td>
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**Table 1:** Review of the trials on Fibromyalgia and Diet [9].

**Conclusion**

This case report emphasizes the importance of associated treatments such as stress avoidance and dietary changes in successful management of fibromyalgia.

**References**