

Treating Small Bowel Obstruction with a Manual Physical Therapy: A Controlled Prospective Efficacy Study

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Background:

Small bowel obstructions (SBO) caused by adhesions are a common post surgical complication with few treatment options available for patients to address the adhesions that cause recurrent SBOs. We have developed a manual therapy regimen that focuses on deformation of adhesions between and within the organs throughout the abdomen and pelvis. In this prospective, internally controlled study the impact on quality of life in patients with a history of SBO after treatment with a manual physical therapy regimen was assessed.

Methods:

Twenty-seven subjects with a history of recurring adhesive small bowel obstructions completed a manual therapy regimen (median=53 years range=10.5-89.4 years) focused on abdominal adhesion deformation. Outcomes were measured via administration of validated questionnaires specific to subjects with SBO to allow for quantification of degree of impact on their quality of life for six domains. Questionnaires were completed before and 90 days after treatment (117.4 ± 25.9 days post treatment follow up). The degree of adhesion deformation was quantified by the improvement in range of motion and tissue mobility as compared to prior to treatment.

Results:

A total of 26 subjects completed the study and demonstrated significant improvements in four domains in the SBO-Q. Improvements in the domains for pain (p=0.0087), overall quality of life (p=0.0016) and pain severity (p=0.0006) were significant when average scores before treatment were compared with scores after treatment. The gastrointestinal symptoms (p=0.0258) domain was marginally significant. There was no statistically significant improvement identified in the diet or medication domains in the SBO-Q for this population. Significant improvements in range of motion in the trunk (p≤0.001) were also observed for all measures.

Discussion:

This manual physical therapy protocol is an effective treatment option for patients with adhesive small bowel obstructions. This study demonstrates significant improvement in reported symptoms and overall quality of life of subjects.