Reviewer’s report

Title: Efficacy and adverse effects of intravenous lignocaine therapy in fibromyalgia syndrome

Authors:

Jonathan H Raphael (JonRaph@AOL.com)
Jane L Southall (julie.burrows@dudleygoh-tr.wmids.nhs.uk)
Gareth J Treharne (GJ884@psg-fs4.bham.ac.uk)
George D Kitas (g.d.kitas@bham.ac.uk)

Version: 1 Date: 1 Jul 2002

Reviewer:

Level of interest: not specified

Advice on publication: Accept after discretionary revisions

General remarks:
This is an interesting article that deserves to be published, as fibromyalgia is a very common condition and difficult to treat efficiently. The article presents a seldom used approach of drug treatment that seems promising. The details appear clear and should allow replication of the work.

I would like to comment on the article step by step, and will do so by referring to headlines and paragraphs as long as page numbers are missing. The major comments are presented first.

Major comments:

1. Methods
I suggest that the headline should be expanded to be called methods and patients. After the well described therapy part in section "Description of therapy", there should be a section presenting the two intervention groups more explicit. Section "Prospective study of side-effects" lines 3-4 and lines 8-11 describe the material in the prospective part of the study, and section "Retrospective study of benefits" lines 2-6 describe another sample that are examined retrospectively. These descriptions could be presented under a new headline called patients. It is unclear to me whether there is an overlap or not between these two samples, which ought to be clarified. Furthermore, under the main headline "Results", section Benefits, first paragraph, demographic and clinical information in two groups which either had received treatment one or several times are described. I propose this information to be presented in a table and placed in the suggested section of patients. The information about duration of pain relief and other results concerning post-treatment pain given in the same section, should however, be let out of such a table and remain presented under results.

2. Results
Side-effects
In this section I miss information about the percentage of individuals who experienced side-effects, in addition the number of incidents. I also believe it is of interest to report how many patients actually had the infusion arrested.

3. Results
Benefits
I consider this section to be moderately reconstructed, as the main point whether the treatment seems to ease pain or not, ought to have a more prominent place. Perhaps it is better to start with the paragraph that begins with "Overall, the treatment was considered to be worthwhile by the patients, with 36 (2/3 of the valid 48) responding that...". Moreover I find that the two important results, duration of pain relief and the reduction of pain severity could be more focused; thus I miss specific comments in the text on the two figures concerning these issues.

4. Discussion
I only have one principal comment on the discussion part, as I find the results well discussed. As stated by the authors in paragraph 7, the sample is most probably selected towards responders. Thus, it would be of interest to know the percentage of responders in an unselected sample of fibromyalgia patients. This could be mentioned briefly in the end of discussion, by for example suggesting the percentage of responders in an unselected patient group to be an objective in a future study.

Minor comments:

5. Background, 2. paragraph;
third line:
A newer review could be added, for example: Crofford LJ Meta-analysis of antidepressants in fibromyalgia. Curr Rheumatol Rep 2001 Apr; 3 (2) : 115

6. Background, 2. paragraph;
sixth line:
Likewise, it exists several newer trials about treating exercise as a treatment possibility in fibromyalgia that could be mentioned. Some of them are listed in a recently published review article [Forseth, KO, Gran, JT. Management of Fibromyalgia. Drugs 2002:62 (4): 577-592] as references 59-65.

7. Background, 3. paragraph;
fourth line:
Also this item has references that are newer: Buskila D. Neuroendocrine mechanisms in fibromyalgia - chronic fatigue. Best Pract Res Clin Rheumatol 2001 Dec; 15 (5) : 747-58

8. Background, 4. paragraph;
next page, third/fourth line:
Here I miss a few words describing the mechanisms of lignocaine.

9. Results
Benefits, 3. paragraph;
To this paragraph I have a question as I have not succeeded in understanding who the valid 48 are (in the description under methods it is listed 50 patients, not 48) and the sum 36+6+6+4 is 52 and not 48. The results presented in the second and third last paragraphs could simply be let out as they are presented in table 2. The text concerning this is long and unnecessarily complicated.

10. Discussion
1. paragraph
I suggest the definition of fibromyalgia to be let out, as it is already defined in background.

Competing interests:

None declared.