

The effect of guided imagery and amitriptyline on daily fibromyalgia pain: a prospective, randomized

Friday, 15 August 2003

The effect of guided imagery and amitriptyline on daily fibromyalgia pain: a prospective, randomized, controlled trial. A Norwegian research team compared the effects of attention distracting imagery, attention focusing imagery and amitriptyline (elavil and similar anti-depressants) on fibromyalgia pain in 55 women. They monitored them daily for pain in a randomized, controlled clinical trial. One group (n=17) received relaxation training and "pleasant" guided imagery designed to distract them from their pain. Another group (n=21) received relaxation training and attention imagery that focused on the "active workings of the internal pain control systems". The control group received treatment as usual (n=17). Patients were also randomly assigned to 50-mg amitriptyline/day or placebo. The slopes of diary pain ratings over a 4-week period were used as the outcome measures. The team found significant differences of the pain-slopes between the three psychological conditions ($P=0.0001$). The pleasant imagery declined significantly ($P<0.005$) when compared with the control group ($P>0.05$). The attention imagery group's slope did not. Neither was there a difference between the amitriptyline and placebo slopes (main effects, $P=0.98$). The study concludes that pleasant imagery is an effective intervention in reducing fibromyalgic pain during the 28-day study period. Amitriptyline had no significant advantage over placebo during the study period.

Citation: Fors EA, Sexton H, Gotestam KG. The effect of guided imagery and amitriptyline on daily fibromyalgia pain: a prospective, randomized, controlled trial. Journal of Psychiatry Research 2002 May-Jun;36(3):179-87