

Treatment of Refractory Irritable Bowel Syndrome with Visceral Osteopathy: Short-term and long-term results of a randomized trial

Authors

- Thu-Van Attali,
- Michel Bouchoucha,
- Robert Benamouzig

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Correspondence to: Michel BOUCHOCHA, Centre d'Exploration Fonctionnelle et de Rééducation Digestive, Service de Gastroentérologie, Hôpital Avicenne, 125, rue de Stalingrad, 93000, Bobigny Cedex, France.

Email: michel.bouchoucha@avc.aphp.fr

Abstract

Objective

In light of the low efficiency of available drugs in treating irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), there has been a growing interest in its alternative therapies. The aim of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of visceral osteopathy for IBS.

Methods

In total, 31 consecutive refractory IBS patients were prospectively included in a randomized, crossover placebo-controlled study. Qualitative evaluation of depression and four symptoms including constipation, diarrhea, abdominal distension and abdominal pain before and after each phase of the study were conducted using visual analog scales, measures of rectal sensitivity and colonic transit time. One year after the study, the assessment of symptoms was performed again in all patients.

Results

Visceral osteopathy was associated with a significant amelioration of self-reported diarrhea, abdominal distension and abdominal pain, while constipation did not change significantly after this therapy. It was also associated with decreased rectal sensitivity, presenting as an increase in threshold volume, constant sensation volume and maximum tolerable volume ($P < 0.001$). However, no significant evolution of rectal sensitivity was observed when patients underwent placebo manipulations. Modifications of depression and total or segmental colonic transit time were not observed. One year after the end of this trial, symptom scores of diarrhea, abdominal distension and abdominal pain were significantly lower than those at enrollment ($P < 0.05$).

Conclusion

This study suggests that visceral osteopathy improves short-term and long-term abdominal distension and pain, and also decreases rectal sensitivity in IBS patients.