

An investigation of the effect of Lycra pressure garments in the management of movement control problems caused by cerebellar ataxia.

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Summary

People with cerebellar ataxia can have considerable problems with movement control. Tasks such as standing up, walking, reaching and manipulation may be difficult to perform in a smooth and coordinated manner. The aim of physiotherapy is to retrain these functional activities and enable the patient to achieve as smooth and co-ordinated a movement as possible. One adjunct to therapy for this type of movement problem is the use of Lycra garments. These are snug-fitting customised and tailored garments, made of stretch Lycra, which are worn next to the skin. The garments can be constructed to accommodate the affected area such as full-length gloves for the arm, or shorts or trousers. There is growing evidence that these garments can help to improve function in people who have a variety of movement control problems caused by damage to the central nervous system. The aim of this project is to evaluate their effect in the management of cerebellar ataxia.

Lay summary

There is some anecdotal evidence for the beneficial use of Lycra pressure garments. These are snugly fitting elasticated garments which are worn beneath the person's clothing, next to the skin. For some people these garments seem to help with the control and coordination of movement. The aim of this project is to find out how useful these garments are for people who have cerebellar ataxia.

The project will consist of a detailed study of a small number of people who have cerebellar ataxia. Volunteers who have the condition will wear the garments daily for several weeks. There will also be periods of time when the volunteers do not wear the garments. Throughout the study all volunteers will be seen weekly by a physiotherapist, who will measure how much difficulty the volunteers are having with certain movements and tasks. By analysing the measurements at the end of the study, it will be possible to find out how useful the garments have been in helping to control the ataxia. It should also be possible to find out if the garments have a carry-over effect; that is, do they have a lasting effect even when they are no longer being worn.

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