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Title

The Impact of Leg Cramps on Sleep and Daytime Functioning in Primary Care

Priority 1 (Research Category)

Musculoskeletal and rheumatology

Presenters

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Abstract

Context: Leg cramps are characterized by abrupt, involuntary contractions of the lower limbs that are intensely painful. This is an increasingly prevalent condition about which much is not understood in their mechanism and few treatment modalities have demonstrated effectiveness. Leg cramps are often under-reported but can have significant impacts on sleep quality and daytime functioning. The negative effects associated with leg cramps on overall health and well-being is likely attributable to their disruption of sleep quality.

Objective: Determine the patient-reported impact of leg cramps on sleep quality and daytime functioning.

Study Design: Cross-Sectional Survey

Setting: Rural and urban primary care clinics in a Midwestern state.

Population Studied: Subjects 19 years of age and older who were patients at one of three primary care clinics.

Main and Secondary Outcome Measures: The main outcome of this study measured the impact of leg cramps on sleep and daytime functioning. The secondary outcome of this study measured the frequency of sleep disturbances in individuals who experienced leg cramps.

Results/Anticipated Results: Patients who reported experiencing leg cramps (n=155) were asked to rate the impact of this condition on sleep and daytime functioning on a scale from 1 (no impact) to 5 (very high impact). Patients reported a mean score of 2.77 (SD = 1.4) for the impact of leg cramps on sleep.

The impact of leg cramps on daytime functioning had a mean of 1.95 (SD =1.4). Furthermore, patients who experienced leg cramps responded to the frequency of sleep disturbances using the categories “Never,” “Seldom,” “Sometimes,” and “Often.” Results from this question indicated that 51.7% of patients (n=94) “Often” or “Sometimes” experienced sleep disturbances attributable to leg cramps.

Conclusions: The data pertaining to the impact of leg cramps on sleep quality and daytime functioning is consistent with current literature. The negative impact of leg cramps on these parameters, as well as the increasing prevalence of leg cramps in primary care patients, demonstrates the importance of determining their common etiologies and the underlying pathophysiology to establish higher quality patient care.