Patients Show Statistically Significant Improvement in Symptoms from Head and Neck Lymphedema with Use of the Flexitouch® System

Original Article:	Longitudinal Effects of a Novel Advanced Pneumatic Compression Device on Patient-reported Outcomes in the Management of Cancer-related Head and Neck Lymphedema: A Preliminary Report
Journal:	*Head and Neck*
Publication Date:	March 18, 2020
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BACKGROUND

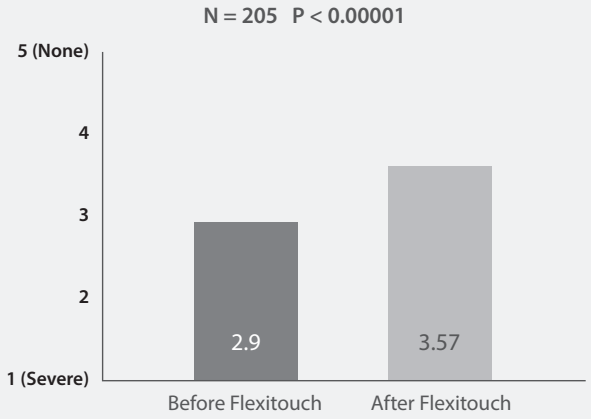
Head and neck lymphedema (HNL) develops most commonly as a secondary effect of cancer and its treatment; some studies show it has a prevalence as high as 90%. With the growing number of head and neck cancer survivors, there is a corresponding need for patients to augment current therapies by reducing barriers to self-care. These barriers include limited use of compression garments, low compliance with therapy and high cost of outpatient care.

OBJECTIVE

To assess changes in patient-reported symptoms and function as well as treatment satisfaction with extended at-home use of the Flexitouch advanced pneumatic compression device (APCD) in patients with cancer-related head and neck lymphedema.

METHOD

- Retrospective analysis of prospectively gathered survey responses from 205 Flexitouch users
- Pre-treatment survey at time of device training; post-treatment survey one month after starting treatment
- Survey comprised of five questions regarding symptoms of head and neck lymphedema and five questions regarding compliance and satisfaction with the device
- Wilcoxon signed-rank test was applied to determine statistical significance of pre-to-post changes



Pre-treatment to post-treatment comparisons show significant improvements in ability to swallow after using Flexitouch system

RESULTS

- 75% of patients had tried conservative therapy (complete decongestive therapy [CDT] and/or compression garments) for at least four weeks prior to starting to use the Flexitouch system
- The pre-to-post symptom survey question responses demonstrated statistically significant improvements in all five queried symptom questions, including level of difficulty when swallowing
- 71% of patients used the Flexitouch system at least once a day, 87% of patients were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the APCD therapy, and 78% found the Flexitouch device "easy" or "very easy" to use
- Though not statistically significant, patients who started APCD therapy with the Flexitouch device shortly after HNL diagnosis observed greater improvement in symptoms than those that started APCD therapy late after HNL diagnosis (>5 years)

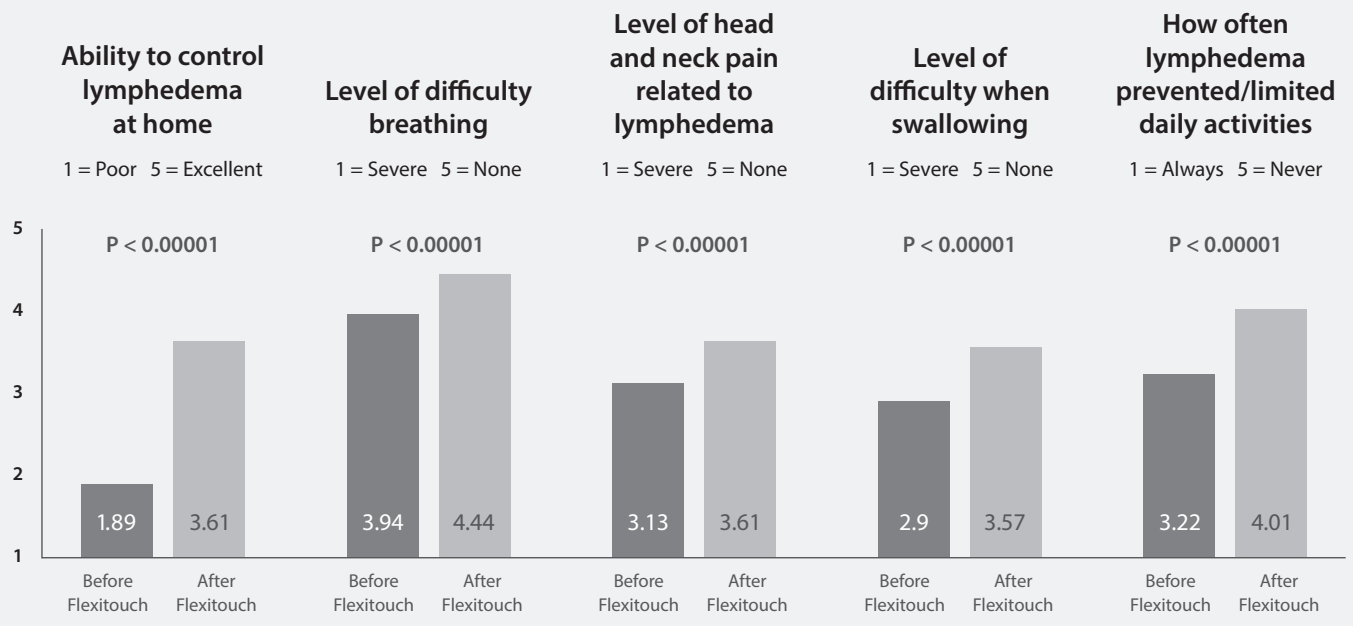
CONCLUSION

Statistically-significant improvements in patient-reported symptoms pre- and post-device use suggest the potential effectiveness of at-home use of the Flexitouch system to improve quality of life of HNL patients. It also provides a rationale for a randomized control trial to assess improvement in symptoms using the Flexitouch device.

Effects of Flexitouch on Patient-reported Outcomes

Pre-treatment to post-treatment comparisons

N = 205



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