Chronic back pain – the vicious circle disease

Development [1]

- (original) pain triggers and risk factors
  - Decreased functional capacity and pain processing
  - E.g. depression, fear of movement, avoidance strategies
  - Increased incapacity for work, neglect of social contacts

Pain

physical

mental changes

social

vicious circle must be broken!

Treatment [2]

- New body experience
- Improved body awareness
- Discovery of resources of own body
- Reduction in pain
- Reduction in general muscle tension
- Mental well-being and relaxation

Multimodal pain therapy

Medical training therapy

Psychological pain therapy

Drug therapy

Patient education
Chronic pain is disconnected from the original pain trigger, i.e. a separate disease arises with a vicious circle in which the consequences of pain lead to new causes of pain.

Examples of the physical consequences of pain are declining functional capacity and central sensitisation (see Section 8), as a result of which the pain becomes independent of the original cause.

However, pain-related sleep disturbances and weight gain can themselves contribute to maintenance of the pain.

Pain also commonly leads to psychological changes (fear of movement, worrying about the future, decreased pleasure in life and self-esteem, depression). These changes can lead to social withdrawal and reinforce the perception of pain.

If incapacity for work occurs as a result of pain, the consequence is a further loss of contacts and independence, and often financial worries. The more activities and tasks that are given up because of the pain, the greater the focus on pain.

The aim of treatment is to break this vicious circle. Multimodal pain therapy is the most effective form of treatment in chronic back pain.

It consists of simultaneous, closely coordinated treatment by therapists of various specialties (medical treatment, provision of information and education based on a biopsychosocial pain model, physical activity, psychotherapeutic treatment measures and occupational therapy).

The aims of multimodal pain therapy are:

- pain reduction, not freedom from pain,
- change in pain experience,
- learning and adoption of active coping strategies,
- functional improvement,
- less demand on the healthcare system,
- return to work,
- improved quality of life.

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