

Spike Mat Does Help -- A Little, Swedish Research Shows

ScienceDaily (Sep. 17, 2010) — Spike mats do not alleviate chronic pain. Nor do they lead to a better night's sleep, new research from Sweden finds. But pain sufferers who have tested a spike mat did experience a measurable reduction in the worst peaks of pain, according to a study carried out at Karlstad University.

It is believed to be the first scientific study of the effects of the spike mat.

The spike mat has been touted as a cure for both pain and insomnia. The marketing has been intensive. But there have been no scientific studies to show that using a spike mat actually helps.

Anette Kjellgren, associate professor of psychology at Karlstad University, has led a study where pain patients had an opportunity to try out the spike mat. They were asked to use the mat every day for three weeks.

"We've monitored a number of psychological variables and pain indicators in the study subjects, -- before, during, and after the study. The results are clear. Treatment in the form of resting on a spike mat yields no measurable effect on sleep, stress, anxiety, or long-term chronic pain," she says.

On the other hand, the researchers did find a measurable reduction of the most acute pain.

"What we found in the study was that pain peaks were truncated. This difference was sufficiently great to be significant, as we researchers say, that is, big enough to be measured and established statistically."

"The spike mat thus appears not to help for patients' constant dull pain, but it can offer some relief for powerful pain attacks."

The study is relatively small: 35 individuals participated, aged 21-81 years. They are all documented patients with long-term pain from muscle tension. A condition for participating in the study was not to have tried the spike mat previously.

"This made it very difficult to find participants in the study. Nearly all pain patients had already given it a try, so they could not be part of the study."

Two different brands of spike mats were used in the study. There were no differences in results between the two makes.

"It's hard to come to grips with long-term chronic pain. But I can nevertheless see that it may be possible to combine the spike mat other treatment, such as floating or cognitive behavioral therapy, CBT. That's something I would like to look at in a new and larger scientific study."

Anette Kjellgren would also like to see more studies that also monitor patients' levels of oxytocin, stress hormone, and endorphins.

Pain physician Lena Werngren with the Värmland County Council has also worked with the study.

The study is titled "Treatment with spike mat for sufferers of muscle tension pains" and will be published later this autumn.

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