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The Role of Myofascial Release in Nonspecific Neck Pain: A Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

Nonspecific Neck Pain (NSNP) is a prevalent musculoskeletal condition characterised by pain and stiffness in the cervical region without an identifiable pathological cause. Myofascial restrictions contribute significantly to NSNP by altering muscle mechanics, reducing Range of Motion (ROM), impairing quality of life and causing persistent discomfort. Myofascial Release (MFR), a specialised manual therapy technique, alleviates fascial tightness, improves muscle function, and restores movement patterns. This literature review evaluates the effectiveness of MFR in managing NSNP. A systematic search was conducted using SCOPUS and EMBASE databases for articles published between 2020 and 2025. Reviews, book papers, editorials, and conference papers were excluded. A total of 742 articles were identified, including 26 randomised controlled trials. After screening, 12 studies met the inclusion criteria, explicitly addressing the therapeutic benefits of MFR in NSNP. The reviewed studies utilised outcome measures such as VAS and NPRS for pain, cervical range of motion (CROM), and the Neck Disability Index (NDI) to evaluate disability levels. Two studies demonstrated that combining MFR with standard physical therapy significantly reduced pain and improved ROM. In contrast, two others highlighted the effectiveness of MFR with Instrument-Assisted Soft Tissue Mobilisation in resolving myofascial trigger points, enhancing CROM, and reducing NDI scores. Additional findings revealed the efficacy of vacuum MFR, dry needling, and MFR combined with stretching or strengthening exercises in improving pain, ROM, and functional outcomes in NSNP management. The review highlights the therapeutic benefits of MFR for NSNP, particularly when combined with conventional therapies, demonstrating its effectiveness in improving pain, CROM, and NDI.

Keywords: Muscles, Quality of life, Range of motion, Soft tissue release.