DOI: 10.7860/JCDR/2026/88273.23028 Abstract No.: 36

Effect of Muscle Energy Technique and Passive Stretching in Patients with Tension-type Headache: A Scoping Review

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Tension-type Headache (TTH) is one of the most prevalent forms of headache, often resulting in decreased quality of life.

Aim: This review aims to determine the effect of the muscle energy technique and passive stretching on pain and range of motion in patients with tension-type headache.

Materials and Methods: Relevant studies published between January 2015 and January 2024 were identified through an extensive search of electronic databases, including PubMed, PEDro, and Google Scholar. Keywords such as 'Tension-type headache', 'Muscle Energy Technique', 'Passive stretching', 'Headache therapy', and 'Physical therapy' were utilised. Only Randomised Controlled Trials (RCTs) published in English were considered. Studies focusing on migraines, post-traumatic headaches, or involving pharmacological, surgical, or non-physical interventions were excluded.

Results: Seven RCTs comprising a total of 500 participants with TTH were included in the review. Five studies assessed Muscle Energy Technique (MET) and two focused on passive stretching. Both MET and passive stretching demonstrated significant improvements in reducing pain and muscle tension. MET appears to improve cervical muscle flexibility and reduce headache frequency, while passive stretching aids in decreasing muscle tightness. The overall quality of the included studies ranged from moderate to low risk of bias.

Conclusion: Both MET and passive stretching are effective strategies for managing TTH by reducing pain and improving function. Further research with larger sample sizes and extended follow-up periods is necessary to confirm the long-term benefits of these therapies.

Keywords: Headache therapy, Physical therapy, Post-traumatic headache

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