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Russian Stimulation in Addition to Graduated Abdominal Exercises Versus Graduated Abdominal Exercises Only on Muscle Strength After Ventral Hernioplasty: A Randomized Controlled Trial

Wpływ rosyjskiej stymulacji stosowanej wraz ze stopniowanymi ćwiczeniami mięśni brzucha oraz samych stopniowanych ćwiczeń mięśni brzucha na siłę mięśni po plastyce przepukliny brzusznej: randomizowana próba kontrolowana

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Abstract

Background. To compare the effect of preoperative application of Russian stimulation in addition to graduated abdominal exercises and graduated abdominal exercises only on the abdominal muscles' strength after ventral hernioplasty. **Methods.** Thirty patients with a ventral hernia, the age of participants ranged from 20 to 45 years, they were randomly distributed into two groups of equal numbers. Group (I) received Russian stimulation on abdominal muscles in addition to graduated abdominal exercises for a 30 min., and group (II) received the same graduated abdominal exercises only for a 30 min., both groups received of treatment protocols 3 times per week for 6 weeks preoperatively. The isokinetic dynamometer was used to evaluate abdominal muscle strength at 4 occasions, baseline assessment, assessment before operation, assessment 2 months after operation, and finally assessment 4 months after operation. **Result.** statistical analysis revealed that there was a significant improvement ($p < 0.05$) in the strength of abdominal muscle preoperatively and postoperatively in both groups in favor of group I. **Conclusion.** It was concluded that the pre-operative application of Russian current stimulation in addition to graduated abdominal exercises is an effective method for abdominal muscle's strength after ventral hernioplasty.

Key words:

Epigastria hernia, Graduated abdominal exercises, Isokinetic dynamometer, Umbilical hernia, Ventral hernia

Streszczenie

Informacje wprowadzające. Porównanie wpływu przedoperacyjnego zastosowania stymulacji rosyjskiej wraz ze stopniowanymi ćwiczeniami mięśni brzucha i samych stopniowanych ćwiczeń mięśni brzucha na siłę mięśni brzucha po plastyce przepukliny brzusznej. **Metody.** Trzydziestu pacjentów z przepukliną brzuszną, w wieku od 20 do 45 lat, podzielono losowo na dwie równe liczebnie grupy. Grupa (I) była poddawana rosyjskiej stymulacji mięśni brzucha jako dodatkowi do stopniowanych ćwiczeń mięśni brzucha przez 30 minut, a grupa (II) wykonywała same stopniowane ćwiczenia mięśni brzucha przez 30 minut. Obie grupy realizowały protokoły leczenia 3 razy w tygodniu przez 6 tygodni przed operacją. Dynamometr izokinetyczny został użyty do oceny siły mięśni brzucha w 4 sytuacjach: ocena wyjściowa, ocena przed operacją, ocena 2 miesiące po operacji i ocena 4 miesiące po operacji. **Wynik.** Analiza statystyczna wykazała istotną poprawę ($p < 0.05$) siły mięśni brzucha przed i pooperacyjnie w obu grupach na korzyść grupy I. **Wnioski.** Stwierdzono, że przedoperacyjne zastosowanie rosyjskiej stymulacji w połączeniu ze stopniowanymi ćwiczeniami mięśni brzucha jest skuteczną metodą na wzmocnienie mięśni brzucha po plastyce przepukliny brzusznej.

Słowa kluczowe

przepuklina nadbrzusza, stopniowane ćwiczenia mięśni brzucha, dynamometr izokinetyczny, przepuklina pępkowa, przepuklina brzuszna

Introduction

A herniation is a protrusion of any organ or tissue through an opening that may be natural or caused by a tear in the abdominal wall. A ventral abdominal hernia is a commonly acquired condition caused by the migration of viscera through a tear in the abdominal wall [1], it includes all hernias in the anterior and lateral abdominal wall [2]. Incisional ventral hernias happen after 3% to 20% of all laparotomies. A traditional repair was a laparotomy with primitive closure of the fascial damage. Recurrence ratio after open primary closures are high, ranked from 41% to 52% during long-term follow-up. It repairs with implantation of mesh have also needed laparotomy and expanded dissection but seem to cause a decrease in reoccurrence rates in the range of 12% to 24% [3].

As abdominal surgery induces a defect in the abdominal wall. This defect can create a region of weakness in which hernia may evolve. Its incidence reaches 2-10% of all abdominal surgeries [4], immobilization postoperative has long been doubted as the criminal for atrophy of the abdominal muscle, particularly for muscles not damaged by the surgery [5].

Also, the use of exercise before acute stress or surgery has appeared as a viable pre-surgical risk reduction strategy [6]. Pre-operative exercise therapy can be effectual for decreasing postsurgical complexity rates and the extent of stay in hospital after cardiac or abdominal operations [7]. The abdominal muscles have a role to play in all movements. Training the abdominal muscles effectively requires far more than merely performing hundreds or even thousands of flexion movements [8].

Russian current is alternating current at a frequency of 2.5-kHz, utilized in 50-Hz right-angled bursts with a burst duty cycle of 50%. The burst duration is 10 milliseconds. The stimulus is utilized for 10-sec. "on" succeeded by 50-sec. "off", with a committed treatment period of 10 minutes in each stimulation session. This protocol (the "10/50/10" regimen), used once daily for weeks, has been proclaimed to cause muscle strengthening [9].

several studies reported the effect of Russian current and exercises of abdominal muscles on strength of abdominal muscles separately [10]. But according to our knowledge there are no study compared the effect of Russian current stimulation in addition to abdominal exercises and abdominal exercises only in the rehabilitation of post-operative hernioplasty. so, the aim of our study was to compare the effect of preoperative application of Russian stimulation in addition to graduated abdominal exercises and graduated abdominal exercises only on the abdominal muscles' strength after ventral hernioplasty. We hypothesized that the application of Russian current stimulation in addition may add a greater value than abdominal exercises only in the rehabilitation of post-operative hernioplasty.

Materials and Methods

Study Design

This randomized controlled study was done in the outpatient clinic in the Faculty of Physical Therapy, South Valley University, (2020). Informed consent was provided from all patients. The procedures confirmed by the Institutional Ethical

Committee Clearance of the Faculty of Physical Therapy at Cairo University and also were registered on Clinicaltrial.gov.

Study population

Thirty-six patients with ventral hernia were enrolled in our study and were diagnosed with hernioplasty after an accurate clinical and physical assessment for eligibility and physical ability to undergoes this study by a general surgeon and a physiotherapist. After screening, all patients' ages ranged from twenty to forty-five years, they were from both genders, and they were steady medically and psychologically. We excluded from the study patients with unstable medical state particularly those with cardiovascular disease, mentally retardation, and un-cooperative patients.

Randomization

Thirty-six patients with ventral hernia were appraised for eligibility. Three patients did not meet the criteria of our selection and three refused to enroll. Thirty patients were appointed randomly into two groups of equal numbers. Random allocation software was used to minimize selection bias [11]. A diagram of patients' retention and randomization throughout the study is shown in figure 1.

Materials for evaluation

Biodex 3, isokinetic Dynamometer System (with back/abdominal unit)

Isokinetic dynamometry has been applied to examine such muscle power imbalances [12]. The Biodex® dynamometer studies the strength of muscle during isokinetic motion, which is a motion with a fixed angular velocity within a stated range against an altered resistance [13]. Isokinetic dynamometers may be used in both clinical and research settings as scientific machines for evaluating, comparing, and assuring injured or treated body parts [14, 15]. The isokinetic trunk testing protocol was performed on a Biodex 3, isokinetic Dynamometer System. Participants were placed on the dual-position back extension-flexion attachment of the dynamometer with the trunk upright, the hips and knees flexed at 90°, the thighs parallel to the floor, and the dynamometer axis of rotation aligned with the imaginary line joining the anterior superior iliac spines, this was considered the anatomic reference position. To hold the participant to the dynamometer attachment, adjustable pads were placed behind the head, the sacrum, and the upper trunk and on the anterior surface of the tibia; in addition, Velcro straps were placed on the upper trunk, the thighs, and the pelvis. The trunk range of movement was limited at 50°, with 30° (-30°) of trunk flexion, relative to the anatomic reference position (0°). According to Grabiner et al., [16] ranges of trunk motion no larger than 50° isolate lumbar motion, reducing hip flexion-extension. Moreover, the location of the dynamometer axis of rotation at the anterior superior iliac spine level and the use of the pad behind the sacrum and the strap on the pelvis minimized hip motion during the test. The test consisted of 2 set of 5 consecutive maximum concentric trunk flexion efforts with 1 min rest between sets. It started from the extension position and was performed with an angular velocity of 60°/s. This angular velocity was chosen because it is considered to

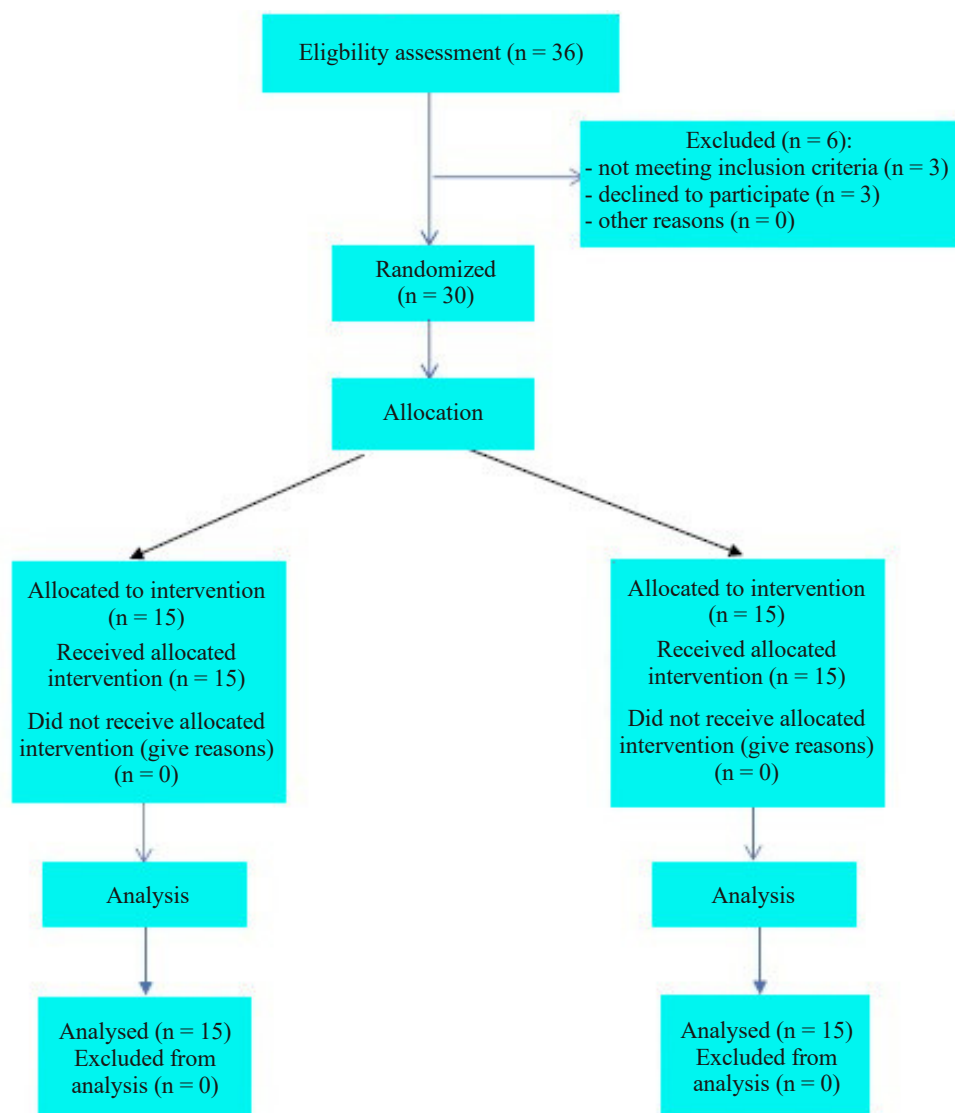


Figure 1. Flow chart of the study

be safe and reliable for measuring mechanical work. Participants were told to keep their hands and arms crossed over their chest during the test. In addition, they were instructed to perform the maximum effort from the beginning of the first repetition and to maintain it until the end of the test. Moreover, they were verbally encouraged with the same indications and intensity across repetitions to exert maximum physical effort throughout the test. Before testing, participants carried out a warm-up that consisted of 1 set of 5 sub maximum trunk flexion–extension exertions at testing angular velocity (60°/s). This warm-up period helped participants become familiar with the equipment and test execution. The overall testing duration was approximately 10 min.

Methods of Treatment

- Group (I) received Russian stimulation on abdominal muscles in addition to graduated abdominal exercises for a 30 min.
 - During the application of Russian stimulation, the patients lied in a semi-recumbent position, one electrode placed on the middle of abdominal muscle belly and the

second placed distal to the muscle belly. The parameters were 2,500 Hz., phase duration 200 µsec., cycle duration 400 µsec., and duty cycle 50%. The bursts are delivered at 50 bursts per second with a burst duration of 10 msec. and an inter burst interval of 10 msec., and stimulation Protocol10/50/10 (10-second contraction time, 50-second off-time, 10 repetitions) [17].

- While the application of Russian stimulation, the patients were instructed to perform graduated abdominal strengthening exercises in the form of activation of rectus abdominis, posterior pelvic tilt, rotational planks, and abdominal crunch on swiss ball with elastic resistance [18].
- Group (II) received only the same graduated abdominal exercises for 30 min.
 - Both groups received of treatment protocols 3 times per week for 6 weeks.

Statistical analysis

SPSS Package program version 25 for Windows (SPSS, Inc., Chicago, IL), Data was screened for normality assumption test

by using the Shapiro-Wilk test ($P > 0.05$) before the final analysis. Two-Way mixed design ANOVA was used to make a comparison between the four groups for the age variable, also the Chi-square test to compare between the four groups for the gender variable. Two-Way mixed design ANOVA and multiple measures ANOVA were used to make a comparison between the tested variables of interest at different tested groups

and measuring periods. All statistical analyses were significant when ($P \leq 0.05$).

Results

Before treatment, there were no significant differences in age ($P = 0.998$), and gender ($P = 1.0$) between the four groups (Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic data of the participants

Variables		Group I (n = 15)	Group II (n = 15)	Test value	P-value	Significance
Gender	Age [years]	33.20 ± 6.18	33.13 ± 6.23	0.002	0.998	NS
	Male	5 (33.3%)	5 (33.3%)	0.0	1.0	NS
	Female	10 (66.7%)	10 (66.7%)	0.0	1.0	NS

Data are expressed as mean ± standard deviation (SD) or by number (%) and P-value > 0.05: non-significant (NS)

Outcomes of Two-Way mixed design ANOVA to compare means value between the two groups. The current findings reveal that there was a significant improvement in both groups I and II

in favor of group I in all occasions ($P < 0.05$), except base-line assessment (Table 2).

Table 2. Comparison mean values of abdominal muscle peak torque between the two groups at base-line assessment, assessment before operation, assessment 2 months after operation, and finally assessment 4 months after operation

	Group I	Group II	F test	P-value	Significance
Base-line assessment	35.13 ± 7.90	35.40 ± 6.40	0.048	0.986	NS
Assessment before operation	53.80 ± 6.85	46.87 ± 7.73	20.244	0.001*	S
Assessment 2 months after operation	48.47 ± 6.01	42.27 ± 7.00	19.361	0.001*	S
Assessment 4 months after operation	50.07 ± 6.28	43.47 ± 6.66	21.020	0.001*	S

MD: Mean Difference, S: Significant, NS: Non-significant, P-Value: Probability Value

Outcomes of Multiple Measures ANOVA to compare means value within both groups in abdominal muscles peak torque at 4 occasions base-line assessment, assessment before operation, assessment 2 months after operation and assessment 4 months

after operation. Comparing the base-line assessment with other occasions our findings reveals that there was a significant improvement in both groups I and II in all occasions in favor of assessment before operation ($P < 0.05$) (Table 3).

Table 3. Comparison mean values of abdominal muscle peak torque within each group between base-line assessment, assessment before operation, assessment 2 months after operation and assessment 4 months after operation

		Base-line assessment Vs assessment before operation	Base-line assessment Vs assessment 2 months after operation	Base-line assessment Vs assessment 4 months after operation	Assessment before operation Vs assessment 2 months after operation	Assessment before operation Vs assessment 4 months after operation	Assessment 2 months after operation Vs assessment 4 months after operation
Group I	MD	−18.67*	−13.33*	−14.93*	5.33	3.73	−1.60
	P-value	0.000	0.001	0.000	0.109	0.590	1.000
	Significance	S	S	S	NS	NS	NS
Group II	MD	−11.47*	−6.87*	−8.07*	4.60	3.40	−1.20
	P-value	0.001	0.010	0.004	0.693	1.000	1.000
	Significance	S	S	S	NS	NS	NS

MD: Mean Difference, S: Significant, NS: Non-significant, P-Value: Probability Value

Discussion

Ventral hernias continue to be one of the most common complications after abdominal surgery, its incidence reaches 15%. Repairing the primary suture has met with dismal outcomes, and the recurrence rates reach 50% [19]. Different types of operation for herniorrhaphy have been developed, but the synthetic mesh technique is the common contributor for decreasing the rate of recurrence, ranging from 10% to 23% [20], so our study aimed to compare the effect of preoperative application of Russian stimulation in addition to graduated abdominal exercises and graduated abdominal exercises only on the abdominal muscles' strength after ventral hernioplasty. Our findings showed significant improvement in mean values of abdominal muscle peak torque in both groups when comparing it with the initial assessment at different occasions (assessment before operation, assessment 2 months after operation and assessment 4 months after operation) in favor of group I that received Russian stimulation on abdominal muscles in addition to graduated abdominal exercises.

Choosing the Biodex System was ideal choice, as it is a valid and reliable device and widely used in measuring abdominal muscle function. Gunnarsson et al. [19].

Our results showed significant improvement in mean values of abdominal muscle peak torque in group I when comparing it with the base-line assessment at different occasions (assessment before operation, assessment 2 months after operation and assessment 4 months after operation), this improvement comes in agreement with Strigård et al. [20], who concluded that inverse proportional relationship between the area of the hernia and the strength of muscle of the abdominal wall. Also, our findings were supported by SALAH et al. [18], who concluded that training the abdominal muscle pre-operative considered as an effective way for improving the strength of the abdominal muscles after ventral hernia repair.

Our findings also showed significant improvement in means values in group II that improvement comes in agreement with Jung et al. [21], who concluded that Russian current stimulates type II muscle fibers. As well as, Hudlicka et al. [22], reported that low frequency of electric stimulation provides long-term changes in type IIb, that related to the duration of the stimulus, so prolonged application of low-frequency current for more than two weeks provides physiological changes into type I fiber.

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Our findings show that improvement in strength of abdominal muscles in group I is more than in group II, this finding may be related to the positive effect of ES in increasing the strength of abdominal muscles, this comes in agreement with Porcari et al. [23], who concluded that NMES have a great impact on improving the abdominal strength and endurance on muscle strength. The current results also supported by Paillard et al. [24], who concluded that the applying the electrical stimulation during voluntary contraction provides a greater improvement of overall contraction force of the muscles. The current finding was contradicted with Den Hartog et al. [13], who concluded that the isokinetic strength of the muscles of the trunk flexor is decreased post-surgical for incisional hernia. And according to Seong [25], concluded that combined application of Russian current and progressive resistance training is a more effective method in strength quadriceps femoris muscle in elderly women with osteoarthritis in the knee joint. According to Alon et al. [26] the combined use of ES with volitional exercises improving the strength of the abdominal muscle better than exercise alone or no exercise.

Further studies with larger sample size are needed to ensure our statistical findings and further investigations are needed to optimize this promising beneficial effect of Russian current stimulation therapy by recognizing the needed parameters in form of preferred time, intensity, frequencies and criteria of patient selection.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that preoperative application of Russian current stimulation in addition to graduated abdominal exercises are safe to patients with a ventral hernia and can be considered as an effective technique provides a greater impact on increasing the strength of the abdominal wall postoperatively than graduated abdominal exercises only for patients with ventral hernioplasty.

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