Do trigger point injections effectively treat fibromyalgia?

**EVIDENCE-BASED ANSWER**

**Possibly.** Trigger point injections appear effective in reducing pain and increasing pressure thresholds in patients with fibromyalgia and myofascial trigger points (strength of recommendation [SOR]: B, small randomized controlled trials [RCTs]).

Consensus guidelines suggest that trigger point injections may have a role in the treatment of fibromyalgia (SOR: C, expert opinion).

**Active injections produce sustained improvement**

A 2011 double-blind RCT randomized 68 female patients with both fibromyalgia and myofascial trigger points to either active trigger point injections with 1 mL 0.5% bupivacaine or placebo-like needle penetration with no medication to an area near the trigger point.1 Patients were evaluated for both local and generalized fibromyalgia symptoms at 4 and 8 days (trial period) and after 30 days (follow-up). Injections occurred on Days 1 and 4, with an option of additional injections on Days 8 and 11.

Compared to baseline (7 days before the injection), patients receiving active trigger point injections had decreased myofascial pain episodes 7 days after the injection (5.6 vs 0.97 episodes; P<.001), decreased pain intensity (62 vs 19/100 mm Visual Analog Scale score; P<.001), and increased pressure threshold at the trigger point (1.5 vs 2.9 kg/cm²; P<.0001), whereas the control group showed no differences.

During Days 1 to 8, patients receiving active trigger point injections required less acetaminophen (0.2 vs 2.7 tablets/d; P=.0001). At Day 8, no patients in the active trigger point injection group requested additional injections, whereas all the patients in the control group requested an injection (P<.0001).

At Day 8, patients also had significantly decreased intensity of fibromyalgia pain, fewer tender points, and higher tender point pressure thresholds; none of these differences were statistically significant in the placebo injection group (data presented graphically). The improvements persisted at 30 days of follow-up (data presented graphically).

**Small study shows improvement with injections after 2 weeks**

An uncontrolled prospective before-after study in 1996 evaluated the effectiveness of 0.5% lidocaine trigger point injections in 9 patients with myofascial trigger points plus fibromyalgia compared with 9 patients with myofascial trigger points alone.2

Immediately after injection, patients with fibromyalgia had a nonsignificant worsening in pain intensity (pain scale 8.1 to 8.4/10; P>.1), but there was a significant improvement at 2 weeks (5.9; P<.01). The pressure threshold also decreased initially (1.7 to 1.4 kg/cm²; P>.1), but significantly increased at 2 weeks (2.4 kg/cm²; P<.01). In comparison, patients without fibromyalgia showed immediate improvement in all domains, which persisted at 2 weeks (P<.01).

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Daniel White, MD; Thomas Staff, MD
University of Colorado
Family Medicine Residency, Denver

EDITOR
Corey Lyon, DO
University of Colorado
Family Medicine Residency, Denver
What the guidelines say

Recent Canadian Fibromyalgia Guidelines discuss trigger point injections in the section on “off-label” medications, stating that they “may have some place in treatment of fibromyalgia.”

References


PRACTICE OPPORTUNITIES

**Bassett Healthcare Network, Bassett Medical Center**

**Family Practice Opportunities in New York State**

**Bassett Healthcare Network**, a progressive health care network in central New York and major teaching affiliate of Columbia University, is seeking Family Medicine MD/DO’s for the following locations:

- Cobleskill
- Hamilton
- Herkimer
- Oneonta
- Oneida
- Sidney

**Bassett** is an integrated health care system that provides care and services to people living in an eight county region covering 5,600 square miles in upstate New York. The organization includes six corporately affiliated hospitals, as well as skilled nursing facilities, community and school-based health centers, and health partners in related fields.

**Key Benefits:**

- Group employed model with competitive salary
- Comprehensive benefit package, including but not limited to medical, dental, CME, relocation assistance and paid malpractice insurance
- Loan repayment opportunities may be available to qualified candidates

With its abundance of recreational and cultural pleasures, central New York provides a great place to live for both individuals and families. There is a strong feeling of community within this region, which attracts people from all over the country. This vast region offers the best of both worlds. The surrounding areas have an abundance of lakes, streams and mountains that form the Catskill Mountain Range and the Adirondack State Park.

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For confidential consideration, please contact:

Medical Staff Recruitment
Bassett Medical Center, One Atwell Road, Cooperstown, NY, 13326
phone: 607-547-6982; fax: 607-547-3651; email: MedStaffRecruitment@bassett.org
or visit our web-site at www.bassettopportunities.org