11-5 Dead-Sea mud packs for chronic low back pain

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The wide spectrum of therapies offered in the Dead Sea region includes the use of the natural mud, which has an unique composition reflecting the magnesium and mineral richness of the Dead Sea waters. Mud pack therapy applied to the whole body, alone, or in combination with other modalities of balneotherapy has been shown to improve many rheumatologic symptoms. The “Ahava Laboratories Ltd.” company located in the Dead Sea area, recently developed mud compresses that can be used in patients’ homes.

The aim of the present study was to assess the efficacy of home application of such mud compresses onto the back of patients suffering from chronic low back pain (LBP).

All patients were above age of 18 and had LBP for more than a year. The pain was localized to the region below the 12th rib and above the gluteal line. Exclusion criteria included acute back pain, inflammatory LBP, malignant disease, disk herniation, patients under narcotics, sensitivity to mud, Spa treatment in the last 6 months, scoliosis, pregnancy, infections, heart failure and osteoporosis.

The patients were randomized into two groups: group 1 treated with mineral-rich mud compresses, and group 2 treated with mineral depleted compresses, serving as a control group. The study was double blinded, neither patients nor physicians were aware of which type of compresses a patient received. Heated mud compresses were applied 5 times a week (from Sunday to Thursday), for three consecutive weeks totaling 15 treatments; the duration of each treatment was 20 minutes.

The study showed an improvement in patients suffering from chronic LBP self-treated at home with natural-mineral-rich mud packs. This improvement was demonstrated by the self-assessment of pain severity, based on a visual analog scale and by the score obtained through a functional questionnaire. The improvement in pain severity and functional score in the treatment group maintained one month after completing the therapy. In the control group, no improvement in the visual analog scale score was seen in any assessment, except for the Ronald & Morris score.

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