

2007

Kinesio Taping in the Neurological Setting: An Adjunct to Traditional Approaches

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Introduction

Neurological lesions often cause upper extremity functional impairments that are difficult to remediate. Some of the more challenging sequelae include shoulder subluxation, edema, abnormal tone, ataxia, and neuropathic pain. Such impairments adversely impact an individual's ability to independently engage in meaningful occupation. The therapist must be vigilant to prevent secondary injury and simultaneously maximize functional use of the limb.

Objectives

1. Appreciate the potential for employment of Kinesio Tape® to address common neurological sequelae.
2. Understand the precautions, contraindications, and limitations of Kinesio Tape® as a modality.

Report

Kinesio Tape® is a modality with ever-growing popularity and success addressing orthopedic issues; however, there is little published in the rehabilitation and occupational therapy literature regarding neurological applications (Sisung, C., 2006, AJOT, 60, 104-110 is an exception). The authors have been employing Kinesio Taping® principles to facilitate the achievement of occupational therapy goals when working with clients with various neurological sequelae. When utilized in conjunction with other traditional approaches, this modality has been very useful for maximizing functional outcomes.

Discussion

Working in an inpatient hospital and rehabilitation facility with a large neurological population, the authors have developed a number of taping strategies utilizing the principles of the Kinesio Taping® method. With appropriate assessment and application, use of Kinesio Tape® has been instrumental in numerous cases to stabilize subluxed shoulders, reduce edema, normalize tone, decrease pain, etc. It has also been useful as a functional "splint" (e.g. for tenodesis). As with any therapeutic approach, this modality has a number of limitations that must also be considered. The benefits and the limitations are all explored.

Conclusion

Although Kinesio Tape® is not a stand-alone intervention, appropriate and judicious use of this modality, as an adjunct to traditional approaches, can greatly facilitate achievement of therapeutic goals.

Contribution to practice base of occupational therapy

Addressing functional sequelae of neurological lesions demands creativity and employment of numerous strategies. Kinesio Tape® is a modality that is compatible with most traditional approaches and can greatly enhance therapeutic outcomes.