

Specific Frequency Microcurrent for Fibromyalgia and Myofascial Pain January 2006

There are many ways to treat myofascial pain, and many ways to treat fibromyalgia. Very few of them can get at the cause of these conditions at the molecular level. One of the best treatments that I have found is specific frequency microcurrent (SFM).

Your body uses very small amounts of current, in millionths of an ampere (an ampere is a measure of the movement of electrons past a certain point), to increase cell wall permeability, stimulate the critical protein production and promote ATP (natural biochemical energy) availability. (Cheng 1982) This helps to promote cellular healing and facilitates many metabolic processes. This amount of current is smaller than needed to stimulate your sensory nerves, so you cannot feel it, but the conductance meter on the machine can record it.

In 1994, Drs. Carolyn McMakin and George Douglas started using specific frequencies of microcurrent that had been researched by Harry Van Gelder DO for use on individual conditions and different tissues. If the specific frequencies were used on the tissues or conditions specified, changes in tissues occurred rapidly. These changes, often immediate, included range of motion, softening of tissues, reduction of nerve and muscle pain and inflammation. The frequencies were specific. That is they did not work on other tissues or conditions. Eventually, Dr. McMakin developed specific protocols of frequency programs that were most effective for a variety of conditions, and uses them at the Fibromyalgia and Myofascial Pain Clinic in Tigard Oregon, near Portland. I visited her and Dr. Deborah Cherachanko for two weeks in 2005. I had already experienced the healing effects of SFM. I knew it worked. I also knew that I had many complex long-standing conditions that I knew about, and wondered how this therapy could deal with them all. I was also concerned about the effect the long trip from New Hampshire would have on the body-wide myofascia trigger points and the central sensitization of fibromyalgia. There is a reasonable hotel within walking distance across the parking lot from the clinic, with the bonus of sufficient practice space for my t'ai chi.

Dr. McMakin has developed a unique method to deliver electrical stimulation to her patients. She has been able to treat successfully the large sheets of fibrosis that may be found in patients with both FMS and CMP, and believes that the microcurrent therapy she has developed restores harmony and balance to patients with both of these conditions (McMakin, 1998). This microcurrent is delivered through graphite/vinyl gloves she wears, or can be carried from one wet graphite vinyl glove through a wet towel or sheet through the body to the other side and another wet towel or sheet and the other glove. The therapy program will work on the tissue or condition specified, and work at the molecular level. This means the therapy is working at the cause of the problem, and not just the symptoms.

This form of therapy works quickly, with minimum discomfort and often a rapid result. Patients feel a sudden release of stress and tension in the damaged muscles. This therapy can be wonderful for scar tissue. Other therapies for releasing this can be incredibly painful and time consuming, as tight tissue is torn away from the surfaces to which it has adhered. I could actually feel the tissue soften and "melt" under the microcurrent gloves. Therapy had to proceed carefully, as joints and

nerves can become very painful if the range of motion in the muscle, ligaments and tendons improves suddenly. Deep tissues, especially very deep ligaments, that are difficult or impossible to reach manually with other techniques can be reached with this therapy

Microcurrent devices are covered under the same Food and Drug regulations that cover TENS units. Specific frequency microcurrent has been shown to effectively and substantially reduce proinflammatory cytokines and improve beta endorphin release in cases of fibromyalgia that occur after post-cervical trauma (whiplash). (McMakin CR, Gregory WM, Phillips TM 2005). It has been shown to be effective in the treatment of myofascial low back pain (McMakin CR 2004) and myofascial pain in the head, neck and face (McMakin CR 1998).

Dr. McMakin has found several subtypes of FMS and each responds to different frequencies. The patient feels little but warmth and tissue softening during the treatment, but after an average of about 11 treatments, her patients had a lasting reduction of pain even after one or more traditional treatments had failed. Different frequencies may be more specific for fibrosis, scarring, central pain etc. There is no pressure. She finds the right sequence of frequencies and can feel the tissue relax and the TrPs “melt.” The TrPs do not disappear, but are more “available” for treatment by manual therapy. She has found about 20 combinations of frequencies that she uses on a regular basis, and she has seen changes she believes to be permanent in the myofascial tissue. Range of motion seems to increase in all patients, but has not been quantified. There is a post-treatment “detox” that starts about 90 minutes after the treatment, which can last for 24 hours. This includes a flu-like ache, nausea and a temporary increase in pain. This can be moderated by water and supplement consumption.

I returned home with substantial improvement. With the lengthening of my very tight iliopsoas and dural tissue, I was an inch and a half taller when I returned than when left, measured on my primary care physician’s scale. This is measurable improvement. I also had purchased a small SFM unit of my own. It is time-consuming, as some of the protocols can take over 70 minutes, but the myofascial pain protocol is only 20 minutes. When I use this therapy I know that I am working on the cause of the symptoms and not just covering them up. The tissues are becoming more and more available as they separate and get back into better, more healthy alignment. For someone with complex and long-standing conditions, good health won’t return overnight. This is just one part of my treatment regimen, but I can look forward to steady progress, and I am very grateful for the work Dr. McMakin has done. I heartily recommend this treatment. Dr. McMakin has been giving seminars on this therapy to many care providers, and has taught it in cities across the world. You may be able to find a FSM care provider near you.

For more on this treatment, visit <http://members.tripod.com/~DrCarol/InfoPat/microcur.htm> , or contact Dr. Carolyn McMakin 6956 SW Hampton Street, Tigard OR 97223, phone 503.443.6100; fax 503.443.1280

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Note: Devin J. Starlanyl has no personal interest in this clinic or this therapy, other than to educate patients in treatment options.