

ABSTRACT

SUBLIMINAL MESSAGES FOR TREATMENT OF PAIN

Don L. Morgan, Mary J. Cole

In 1983 Owen L. Stitz and Philip Hansen developed subliminal pain blocking program for a National Football League team to reduce reliance upon medication and facilitate physical therapy treatment following injury. The program has since been modified for general use and has been available by prescription. Anecdotal reports showed dramatic results. The purpose of this survey is to document the effectiveness of SCWL subliminal tape and to serve as a pilot study for research on pain relief.

Findings

This study is a report of people who used SCWL subliminal program number 351 to gain relief from acute and chronic pain. The study shows that 76% received relief and 67% received the benefit expected from the tape, which was used for relief. from:

Arthritis	7 patients	86% found relief
Headaches	3 patients	67% found relief
Sinus	2 patients	50% found relief
Fractures	2 patients	100% found relief
Shingles	2 patients	100% found relief
Cancer	2 patients	100% found relief.
Menstruation	2 patients	100% found relief
Osteosclerosis	1 patient	100% found relief.

The average level of pain prior to using the SCWL tape was 4.05 on a five point scale. With regular use of the SCWL tape, the average pain level was 2.05. After discontinuing regular use, the lasting effect was an average pain level of 3.19. All 16 patients who experienced a 'change in pain level reported reduced intensity.

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Immediate pain relief

The number of patients reporting pain relief while listening regularly, to the SCWL pain relief tape was greater than chance." Assuming 50 percent of the patients would experience some relief, even if the tape had no effect, the percentage of patients reporting relief while using the tape (76%) was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = .576$, $df = 1$, $p < .025$; McNemar test, $p < .01$). The mean number of levels of pain reduction was 2, $SD = 1.612$.

Patients reported the following degrees of relief:

Complete relief, pain free (n = 4).	19%
Relief to mostly unaware of pain (n = 5)	24%
Relief to where pain can be ignored (n = 5).	24%
Relief to constant pain, can work (n = 1).	5%
Relief to severe pain, can work some (n = 1)	5%
No appreciable relief (n = 5).	24%

Lasting effects after discontinuing regular use of tape.

Ten patients (48%) reported lasting relief. Two patients with cancer and osteosclerosis of the spine experienced pain at higher levels after use than before starting the program, although with regular use they were only aware of pain when attention was directed to it. Nine patients (43%) reported pain returning to the previous levels after discontinuing its use.

Counting only the 15 patients whose pain was reduced to level 3 or lower, ten (67%) reported lasting relief, with less need to play the tape.

Auto-reverse tape player

The data here were analyzed using Chi-square analysis and Fisher's Exact Test. Although a high proportion of patients using auto-reverse players experienced immediate and lasting relief, the difference was not statistically significant. However, this trend is worth exploring with a larger sample.

Frequency of SCWL use

Patients who reported a higher usage tended to report more pain relief. The relationship between frequency of use and pain reduction approaches significance and merits further evaluation on a larger sample.

Quality of tape player

Using Spearman's rank correlation, there was no relationship, between quality of tape player and pain relief.

Age and pain relief

The Spearman rank order correlation between age and lasting relief, with original pain partialled out was $r = .4231$ (one- tailed, $p < .05$). Pearson's r on unranked data = $-.3736$ $p < .05$. This means that older patients were more likely to report lasting. relief, and not because older patients had lower starting levels.

Reduction. in medication

Six patients (28.6%) reduced consumption of pain medication after using the program.

Self-appraisal

It was initially speculated that one's self-concept, self- image or self-esteem might be related to increased effectiveness of the pain relief program. From the data collected in this survey the method of measuring self-appraisal "was not" sufficiently sensitive to show this relationship, if such a relationship does in fact exist.

Conclusion

The ex post facto research design of this survey did not involve a control group. To determine the effectiveness of the SCWL technique for pain relief, the following hypothesis was tested.

More than half of those who use SCWL technique for pain relief will report reduced intensity of pain.

The evidence in this study is sufficient to accept the hypothesis. Of the 21 people participating in this survey, 76 percent reported noticeable relief, 67 percent received the expected benefit, and 81 percent intend to continue using the tape. With regular use, 67 percent are pain free or the pain is forgotten except when attention is directed to it. Of the 15 patients whose pain was reduced to level 3 or lower, ten (67%) reported lasting relief, without needing to continue playing the tape regularly.

One woman said, "No amount of money could buy my tape."

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We recognize the contribution of the subjects who participated in this survey. Although their identities must remain confidential, their contribution to understanding the power of subliminal stimuli is important.

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