Hot Topic 9: Science & art of symptomatic treatment

Grand perspective on tackling motor impairment

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Motor impairment is not just about mobility, it incorporates involvement of pyramidal, extrapyramidal and cerebellar tracts resulting to problems with strength, tone, balance, and results in difficulties with walking, sitting, transferring and upper limb function. In a condition such as multiple Sclerosis (MS), which can result in a broad range of impairments, motor dysfunction can also be aggravated by other symptoms such as cognitive impairment, mood and fatigue. Taken together this has a direct impact on a wide range of functions and activities including an increased risk of falling, activities of daily living and employment. Grand perspective on tackling motor impairment

While self-management and expert physiotherapy input are the cornerstones the management of motor impairment, there are many other treatment options addressing weakness, spasticity and ataxia. There is now a sound evidence base to support the use of slow-release fampridine to improve muscle strength and a range of interventions for spasticity with a clearer sense of the role of cannabinoids and promising studies of the role of synaptic plasticity. Targeting upper limb function, particularly in the more disabled patient, has recently become a focus of activity with the incorporation of robotics and neurophysiological interventions. As with all symptoms of MS, motor impairment requires on-going, expert input to minimise its impact on the individual.

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