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Indications: pain

Case description:

What's new from here? Well, the usual things. Your Alpha-Stims still work and I still teach about them, of course. I started October 4, this time 77 students in 3rd year PT. We've already had the chapter on electrotherapy for decreasing pain so they already know everything about Alpha-Stim microcurrent.

The problem is always to have a few nice examples, but this year I was lucky. During the lessons I always ask them who has an injury. Most people here play soccer and then have pain in their ankles or knees and so it's easy to have an example of what we could do with microcurrent or TENS or one of the other varieties. After the treatment I discuss the effect, how long it lasts and how strong it is, I use VAS scores and I always look for an exercise they could do to prove in a test-retest how much the improvement is. And one of the very nice examples was with one of the female students; she had a chronic bilateral achillestendinitis. Went to doctors, had echoes, physiotherapy, medicine (NSAID), stopped wearing high-heel shoes etc. But this did not completely solve the problem. Pain decreased to some acceptable level and she was trying to live with it. As I warned her that this is no attitude for a future PT, she said: but nothing helps. So I thought why not try something funny. I asked her to stand on her toes and heels and go up and down every 2 seconds and she was able to perform this 7 times before the pain came up. Then I started TENS treatment at the left achilles tendon, two electrodes (proximal - distal) having the TENS switched to gate-control (= modulated at 100 Hz, with very short pulsewidth). Mean time I asked a student to do a microcurrent treatment at the right tendon with an Alpha-Stim and probes. After 20 minutes both treatments stopped and I asked her again to stand on her toes and heels. After 40 times she started to feel it again but only on the left (TENS treatment) side. The right side remained pain free. First no comment was necessary of course but then one of the students said: you told us that TENS is a symptomatic treatment and microcurrent would be more treating the cause, how are we ever going to know the difference? So I said let's do the retest again after 20 minutes rest. I continued lecturing and after 20 minutes she did the same test again with the following funny result. Left: pain came back after 8 repetitions. Then I asked her to continue on the right foot only (which is labor for the tendon and muscle) and she went on to 40 repetitions and still felt nothing. Teaching is such a nice job if you have the right examples.