

Researchers prove correlation between the use of mobile phones and the development of new thumb pathologies

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Researcher Raquel Cantero, expert in the study of the hand. To ease pain at the thumb, she has designed the whale orthosis, which facilitates the movement of this finger with an adequate load. Credit: University of Malaga

A study on the pain at the base of the thumb conducted in the University of Malaga has evidenced that a continuous use of the mobile phone, especially among young people, goes hand in hand with new pathologies of this finger.

This research, carried out in cooperation with a group from Italy (Fondazione Don Carlo Gnocchi) and another from the U.S. (Gannon University), has identified a generational change in the use of the thumb due to the influence of new technologies.

"We have discovered a direct correlation between people's occupation and the cause of thumb pain," explains Raquel Cantero, Professor of the UMA Department of Physiotherapy, who adds that, therefore, our daily activities are engendering changes in the physical position of this finger, which may have an influence on its future evolution.

"The pathologies are changing. Atrophied thumbs are more and more frequent in our practice; in fact, we already talk about the i-Phone tendonitis," says the researcher of the UMA Faculty of Health Sciences.

In this regard, the expert points out that, from a young age, the pinch grip position of the hand is not used as much as before, and at school, with touchscreens, writing is less frequent, so the thumb is also used to a lesser extent.

Changes in the evolution of the hand

These changes in the use of the thumb have led the professor of the UMA to predict alterations in the evolution of the hand itself. A new line of research which first hypotheses were outlined in the article "The hominid thumb and its influence on the employment during evolution," published in the scientific journal Reumatismo.

"Looking at what happened in primates' brain when they came down from trees and their [brain structure](#) changed as they began to use their hands to carry out different functions, we wonder if the passage of time will not be such a milestone nowadays due to this change in the use of the thumb, the key finger involved in the pressure and functionality of the human [hand](#)," explains Cantero.

Professor Cantero of the University of Malaga is going to participate next June 17th in the International Congress for Hand Therapy, held in Berlin until June 21st. A meeting where Cantero is going to present these [thumb](#)-related issues and analyze how to ease pain through minimally invasive techniques and specific exercise programs.

More information: J.H. Villafañe et al. The hominid thumb and its influence on the employment during evolution, *Reumatismo* (2019).

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