

New therapy proposed to treat 'axillary web syndrome' in women who have had a mastectomy

June 23 2023



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Axillary web syndrome, also known as lymphatic thrombus, is a complication in the clinical manifestations suffered by many women after overcoming breast cancer, mainly affecting their shoulder mobility.

In order to reduce the evolution time of these axillary thrombi in patients with a mastectomy—total or partial extirpation of the breast—researchers of the Physiotherapy group of the University of Malaga have developed a new therapy based on manual techniques that can "significantly" reduce pain and improve mobility.

A research led by Rocío Martín, Professor at the Faculty of Health Science of the UMA, and the physiotherapist María Jesús Vinolo that derives from the doctoral thesis of Jesús Baltasar González, has been published in the journal *Supportive Care in Cancer*.

According to these experts, the axillary web syndrome may delay the application of radiotherapy in women who have had a mastectomy, a treatment that should be done in a particular period of time. "This delay is caused by the impossibility of reaching the maximum flexion and abduction position of the shoulder during radiation. Thus, the importance of reducing the evolution time of the lymphatic cording to be able to receive treatment within the protocol times established by oncology," they claim.

Manual therapy and stretching

The therapy is an individualized physiotherapy treatment, based on manual therapy and stretching, applied by a lymphology specialist. It consists of 15 sessions carried out for three consecutive weeks, in addition to advice and exercises to do at home.

"So far, the treatments applied on women with axillary web syndrome do not usually go beyond the educational field," says the researcher at the University of Malaga.

In this first phase of the study, the researchers have carried out a [systematic review](#) and a meta-analysis. As a next step, this scientific

team is about to start a clinical trial within the Healthcare Management Area, Campo de Gibraltar Oeste, particularly, in the Lymphedema Unit of Algeciras, which already has the approval of the Ethics Committee.

They will work with a sample of about 50 women and study different variables like functionality, movement range, pain, and quality of life.

More information: Jesús Baltasar González-Rubino et al, Effectiveness of physical therapy in axillary web syndrome after breast cancer: a systematic review and meta-analysis, *Supportive Care in Cancer* (2023). [DOI: 10.1007/s00520-023-07666-x](https://doi.org/10.1007/s00520-023-07666-x)

Provided by University of Malaga

Citation: New therapy proposed to treat 'axillary web syndrome' in women who have had a mastectomy (2023, June 23) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-06-therapy-axillary-web-syndrome-women.html>

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