



Innovative minimal invasive technique for reducing phantom limb pain

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According to a new research presented at Annual (2016) scientific meeting of Society of Interventional Radiology, phantom pain can be significantly reduced by an innovative technique. This technique reduces the chronic pain originating from the site of amputated limbs. This minimally invasive targeted treatment uses cold blasts (cryoablation) which offers a promising approach to improve the quality of life of patients suffering from phantom limb pain.

Dr. J. David Prologo, M.D, Assistant professor, Division of interventional radiology, Emory University School of Medicine believes that there were not much treatment options until now for the patients suffering from phantom pain. Cryoablation is certainly a ray of hope for treating this previously untreatable enduring side effect of amputation.

Military personnel injured during fighting and individuals with complicated problems like uncontrolled diabetes forms the major percentage of population suffering from pain probably due to lost limb. Approximately 200,000 amputations take place every year as reported by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Twenty patients were treated by the interventional radiology team at Emory University. Each person underwent image-guided cryoablation of the nerve and scar tissue in the residual limb (the part of the body that remains after an amputation has been performed). This technique involves careful placement of a probe through skin and temperature is allowed to fall for 25 minutes in order to generate an ablation zone which will ultimately shut down the nerve signals.

Patients were asked by the investigators to rate their pain on visual analog scale (VAS) from 1 to 10 at 0 and 7th, and 45th day after the treatment. There was a significant reduction in the average pain score from 6.4 points (before) to 2.4 points on 45th day.

Prologo feels that it is extremely difficult for the physicians to access all the nerves causing pain without image guidance. Advanced image-guided therapies plus interventional radiologist skill set may target difficult to find nerves and help in improving the quality of life of patients significantly.

Researchers at Emory university have planned to continue with the research on this emerging intervention by studying its effectiveness for other six months and further. Prologo and his team have applied for the grant from defense department so as to benefit the maximum individuals with phantom limb pain.

Society of Interventional Radiology

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