

LETTER TO EDITOR

Use of Quranotherapy in the Treatment of Primary Headache

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Dear Editor,

Headache is one of the most common symptoms worldwide. Approximately 90% of people in the United States experience headache during their lifetime. Primary headache disorders are defined as headaches that are unrelated to an underlying medical condition and are categorized into four groups: migraine, tension-type headache, trigeminal autonomic cephalalgias, and other primary headache disorders¹. Meditation is the act of giving your attention to only one thing, either as a religious activity or as a way of becoming calm and relaxed². Transcendence refers to the aspect of Allah's nature and power which is wholly independent of the material universe, beyond all physical laws³. Available evidence suggests that meditation has a positive effect on migraine and tension headaches⁴. There are five dimensions of health: physical, mental, social, spiritual, and religious health⁵. Quranotherapy (or Quranic therapy), a modality of transcendental meditation, involves reciting, reading and listening to the Quran to improve physical, social, mental, spiritual and/or religious health⁶. Herein, we discussed use of Quranotherapy in the treatment of primary headache to attract attention to use of the Quran in therapy.

The Quran is the instructor, true wisdom, guide, and leader of the world of humanity; it is both a book of wisdom and law, a book of prayer and worship, a book of command and summons, and a book of invocation and Divine knowledge – it is a book for all spiritual needs; and it is a sacred library offering books appropriate to the ways of all the saints and veracious, the purified and the scholars, whose ways and paths are all different⁷.

Allah says “We send down (stage by stage) in the Quran that which is a shifa (healing) and a mercy to those who believe”⁸. The Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu Alayhi Wa Sallam) said that “The best remedy is the Quran”⁹ and “Surah Al-Fatihah is a ruqyah”¹⁰. Ruqyah refers to the shifa method based on the Quran and hadith through the recitation of the Quran, seeking of refuge, remembrance, and supplication that is used as a means of treating sickness and other problems by reading verses of the Quran, the names and attributes of Allah, or by using the prayers in Arabic or in a language the meaning of which is understood¹¹. Quranotherapy is used for the purpose of shifa in physical, social, mental, and spiritual disorders in many parts of the world, especially in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Türkiye. Based on the interpretation of shifa from mufasssirin (interpreters), the outline of shifa concept is as follows: (a) Allah has absolute authority to spread and shifa all diseases to mankind; (b) The Quran is a divine revelation from Allah as shifa for human disease, especially spiritual disease; (c) Allah had created natural resources as medication for physical disease¹².

Several studies have reported that meditation, mostly referring to mindfulness meditation, has a potential effect in controlling headaches, such as migraine and tension-type headache¹³. In a meta-analysis including ten randomized controlled trials and one controlled clinical trial, Gu et al.¹³ reported that when compared to control group data, mindfulness meditation induced significant improvement in pain intensity and headache frequency in patients with primary headache. In a subgroup analysis of different meditation forms, mindfulness-based stress reduction displayed a

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significant positive influence on pain intensity. Moreover, 8-week intervention had a significant positive effect¹³. However, there are scarce studies about use of Quranotherapy in the treatment of primary headache in the literature. Tajadini et al.¹⁴ examined the effect of prayer including the Quranic teachings on intensity of migraine pain. Three months after intervention, mean score of pain intensity by visual analogist scale score decreased in patients in both propranolol and prayer groups. At this time, the mean scores of pain intensity were 5.4 ± 1.1 and 4.2 ± 2.3 in patients in propranolol and prayer groups, respectively ($P < 0.001$). Prayer including the Quranic teachings was more effective than propranolol in reducing pain in migraine patients. They concluded that prayer can be used as a nonpharmacologic pain coping strategy in addition to pharmacologic intervention for this group of patients¹⁴. A 22-year-old male with cluster headache, who deteriorated despite morphine treatment, has been successfully improved with use of ruqyah including incantations of the Quran, applied by a local imam (Islamic cleric). His condition improved significantly and continued to have weekly preventative ruqyah therapy. Since resorting to ruqyah, he has not any morphine treatment and the level and duration of pain have reduced significantly¹⁵.

Human nature has two faces of corporeal and spiritual. However, modern medicine almost always focuses on the corporeal side of humans, but not spiritual dimension. Every human

being has many subtle faculties (lataif) such as conscience, nerves, emotions, intellect, desires, heart, spirit, inner heart (sirr), etc. The Quran, the word of Allah, addresses not only the material organs such as the brain, eyes, and ears, but also the spiritual feelings of man such as the soul, heart, and mind. The Quran is strength and food for hearts and shifa for souls¹⁶. Abdullah et al.¹⁷ noted that listening to Quran recitation can generate alpha wave and can help a person always in relax condition compared with listening to hard rock music.

In conclusion, limited studies have shown that Quranotherapy to be effective in patients with primary headaches in the literature; therefore, we recommend that randomized controlled studies containing large series on this subject should be conducted in societies with different cultures and beliefs. Further studies using electrophysiological and neuroimaging techniques and neurohormonal analyses should be conducted to determine how effective Quranotherapy is in primary headache. These studies will fill the gap in the literature and guide healthcare professionals in clinical practices.

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