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Physiotherapy management of children with Dermatomyositis and other inflammatory diseases

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Juvenile dermatomyositis is a rare condition affecting about 2 per 1,000 000 children. The disease is characterized by skin rash and myositis causing weakness in proximal muscles versus distal muscles. However the other inflammatory diseases such as juvenile idiopathic arthritis and lupus also have myositis as part of their presentation. Previously these inflammatory diseases had significant morbidity; however with modern medical management and better understanding about the importance of exercise, the outcomes have improved significantly. Exercise therapy has been shown to be safe in active myositis in children in all inflammatory diseases and is now used significantly, alongside the medical management, in order to reduce inflammation and to encourage recovery and repair of the muscles. Specific physiotherapy techniques should be used initially to ensure that muscle are retrained and repaired accurately and that the biomechanics of the body are preserved. As the strength and stamina improves with specific training then aerobic fitness can be then retrained. Research shows that children can regain specific strength and stamina with a program including a high repetition and low resistance regime, followed by focusing upon balance and proprioception and then more aerobic functioning. Quality of life can be improved significantly alongside a reduction of pain and fatigue and so exercise therapy is a vital part of the management of children with inflammatory disease.

Biography

Susan Maillard qualified as a physiotherapist in 1989 and for the last 22 years has specialized in Physiotherapy for Paediatric Rheumatology. She has worked at the National Centre for Paediatric Rheumatology at Great Ormond Street Hospital, London, UK for this time and has been at the forefront of the changes and developments within this specialty. She has completed a Masters Degree with the focus being upon the safety of exercise in children with Juvenile Dermatomyositis. She has published both in reputed journals as well as various textbooks and also serves on the medical advisory board of The Myositis Association and is a serving member of council for the Paediatric Rheumatology European Society.

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