

Accessory and physiological movement tests used during the cervical spine examination: an update an physical therapists' attitudes and approaches survey

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Abstract

Objective: A correct examination is essential during a differential diagnosis of neck pain patients. Therefore, the objective of this study was to provide an update on the properties considered most important by PTs when conducting accessory and physiological movement tests during the cervical spine physical examination. Methods: A total of 84 private physiotherapy centres participated in this online cross-sectional survey including 415 active physiotherapists and members of one autonomous Spanish Physiotherapists School. The main outcome measures were the frequency and the importance of mobility and pain responses assessed during cervical spine examination and the most commonly utilized reference to make a judgement. Results: Pain responses are most frequently used by physiotherapists at a rate of 79.8% and also rated as important by 42.65% respondents mobility aspects such as quality of end-feel (17.3%), quantity of translation (16.4%) and quality of resistance (13.3%) during passive accessory intervertebral movement tests. During passive and active physiological movement tests, the most frequent properties assessed were the quality of motion path (80,5% and 84.3% respectively) and quantity of angle bending (81,7% and 77.6% respectively). Pain responses are used as reference by 54.7% to make a clinical judgement during passive accessory intervertebral movement tests. Conclusion: Physical therapists face validity in relation to passive accessory intervertebral movement test for assessing spinal segmental motion aspects has been decreasing with more attention devoted to pain responses. The current skepticism regarding the motion properties assessed with these tests is associated with utility aspects such as validity, sensitivity, accuracy and specificity.

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