

Using peripheral nerve blocks to treat facial pain may produce long-term pain relief

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A new study has shown that use of peripheral nerve blocks in the treatment of Trigeminal Neuralgia (TGN) may produce long-term pain relief.

TGN is a condition involving sudden episodes of severe facial pain that significantly reduces quality of life in those affected. When medication fails to control the pain, some patients turn to invasive procedures that require a high level of expertise and can result in long-standing numbness. Peripheral Trigeminal Nerve Blocks (PTNB), a procedure in which a numbing medication is injected at the sites where the problem nerve reaches the face, is a promising alternative to the riskier, ganglion-level procedures, although its efficacy in both short-term and long-term management of TGN has not been well studied.

In a case series in this week's *American Journal of Emergency Medicine*, Michael Perloff, MD, assistant professor of neurology at Boston University School of Medicine, examines nine patients with TGN treated with PTNB. He finds that all nine had immediate relief of their pain after the procedure, with most reporting that they were pain-free. In addition, six of the nine patients noted continued pain relief from a range of one to eight months following the procedure, with two of them having complete resolution of their pain months after the injections.

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Perloff, also a neurologist at Boston Medical Center, sees these results as a promising step for treating patients with TGN. "PTNB can be a simple, safe alternative compared to opioids, invasive ganglion level procedures or surgery."

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