

Abstract

Colonic Irrigation - A useful alternative in management of Constipation

The management of constipation remains a challenge in clinical practice. Prescription medicine such as the use of laxatives and bulking agents offers some level of relief but are not always effective. Treatment options in chronic cases include biofeedback therapy, colonic lavage and manual evacuation. These too offer only limited and unsatisfactory results (1).

Colonic irrigation using different approaches have been demonstrated to be useful in the treatment of functional constipation (2) (3) (4) and various bowel related problems.(5) (9). The procedure infuses water into the colon to facilitate the evacuation of bowel contents. Water hydrates (soften and loosen) bowel contents and activates peristaltic activity resulting in spontaneous bowel movement and evacuation of bowel contents. Although not regularly recommended, studies have demonstrated the beneficial effects of colonic washout in the treatment of constipation and faecal incontinence. (6) (7) (8)

With the availability of modern instruments incorporating safety designs that meets F.D.A. guidelines, a more serious look at colonic irrigation as a useful alternative in management of constipation should be considered. Design of instrument also provide for the observation of the discharging waste and offers a more objective means of assessing the outcome of therapy.

In this paper, the results of patients suffering from chronic constipation who have not responded satisfactorily to conventional therapy and had colonic irrigation carried out on them are reported. In the majority of cases, symptomatic relief and improvement were noted. Details of the procedure and the rationale for recommending the procedure will be discussed.

Conclusion : Colonic irrigation can be a useful alternative in the management of constipation. It is a simple procedure yet its therapeutic potential remains unexplored. Clinical studies should be undertaken to ascertain the safety and efficacy of the procedure and to consider its use as an alternative option in the management of constipation.

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