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[Can short-term exposure to extremely low temperatures be used as an adjuvant therapy in the treatment of affective and anxiety disorders?].

[Article in Polish]

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Abstract

AIM: The aim of the research was to assess the effect of whole-body cryotherapy (WBCT) on the symptoms observed in a group of patients suffering from affective and anxiety disorders and their own subjective assessment of life satisfaction.

METHOD: The study group was given short-term exposure (120-180 sec.) to temperatures between -110 degrees C and -160 degrees C on each working day for a period of 3 weeks (a total of 15 treatments). Both the study group (n=26) and control group (n=34) were observed at the beginning and the end of this 3 week interval. Standard psychopharmacological treatment was carried out in both groups, independently of whether cryotherapy was used or not. Hamilton's scales of depression and anxiety were used, together with the life satisfaction scale.

RESULTS: A statistically significant larger improvement, together with a better mean state after 3 weeks, was observed with respect to 11 of the 14 components of the anxiety scale in the study group compared to the control group (except symptoms associated with the gastrointestinal and genitourinary symptoms and behaviour at interview). A larger improvement, together with a better mean state after 3 weeks, was observed with respect to 12 of the 16 components of the depression scale (except digestive, sexual life hypochondria, body weight and criticism) and 6 of the 11 components of the life satisfaction scale (physical well-being, physical condition, domestic activity, professional activity, personal interests and general satisfaction from life) in the study group.

CONCLUSIONS: Cyclic short-term whole-body exposition to extremely low temperatures significantly reduced the severity of depressive and anxiety symptoms and increased the life satisfaction.

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