Osteopathic Manipulative Treatment for Temporomandibular Disorder in a Patient With Rheumatoid Arthritis: A Novel Approach
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Hypothesis: Consistent application of specific OMT techniques will significantly improve pain and function as measured by the Visual Analog Pain Scale (VAS), Maximal Mouth Opening (MMO) distance, and Temporomandibular Index (TMI) measurements in a young woman with Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) and Temporomandibular Disorder (TMD).

Case Description: A 29-year-old female presented with a history of TMD and RA. The patient’s RA was in remission and without treatment for over a year. Her TMD was initially managed 2 years ago with physical therapy and braces, but was re-aggravated by a motor vehicle accident.

Methods: The specific OMT protocol was used 11 times in 10 weeks. Treatment consisted of direct, indirect, and balancing techniques for the masticatory muscles, mandible, cervicals, thoracics, and sacrum. The VAS/MMO was measured at each visit, while the TMI was assessed at the initial, final, 2-week, 1-month, and 3-month visits.

Results: The patient began treatment with a pain level of 40mm and achieved a level of zero pain at week 6. She remained pain free at the 3-month follow-up. MMO significantly improved from the initial visit (36mm) to the 3-month follow-up (40mm). The TMI also improved throughout the study beginning with a measure of 0.74 and ending at 0.161.

Conclusion: Numerous studies have analyzed the efficacy of non-invasive treatments for TMDs in the general population, but an effective modality for patients with RA has not been established. Our report demonstrates that OMT is a viable method for improving pain and temporomandibular function in a patient with RA.