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THE EFFECTS OF THERAPEUTIC TAPING FOR MUSCULOSKELETAL CONDITIONS; A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

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Purpose: To undertake a comprehensive review of the literature pertaining to the therapeutic effects of taping used in management of musculoskeletal conditions.

Relevance: Taping is commonly used in the management of musculoskeletal and sports injury conditions. Several proposed mechanisms, effects and possible benefits have been suggested to support the use of taping in the clinical setting. This review examined the key research findings in the literature relating to the use of taping.

Description: The databases of The Cochrane Library, the Physiotherapy Evidence Database (PEDro), Medline, Ovid, Pubmed, Scopus and SportsDiscus were systematically searched using the keywords tape, taped, taping, strap, strapped, strapping, brace, braced and bracing. Terms that were region and condition specific and commonly used taping techniques were also included in the search. All electronically available research studies using taping as a therapeutic tool were reviewed.

Evaluation: From the reviewed available research studies the intended purposes and possible effects of taping could be broadly summarised as: pain reduction, mechanical effects, neuromuscular effects, muscle facilitation or inhibition, proprioception enhancement, tissue deloading or unloading, psychological effects and effects of tape on oedema.

Conclusions: In conclusion, the main effects of taping used as a therapeutic tool in the management of musculoskeletal conditions were proposed in the literature to be neurophysiological. Possible mechanical effects particularly for the knee and ankle joints were also proposed. The major limitation of a number of studies was that they were performed on asymptomatic participants which limited the applicability of the conclusions drawn. Further research is recommended using symptomatic participants to better understand the therapeutic effects of taping in a clinical setting.

Implications: Clinicians employing the use of taping in the management of musculoskeletal conditions need to be aware of the main purported effects of taping and researchers planning studies on the effects of taping need to consider the use of symptomatic participants to enhance the applicability of the conclusions of the studies.

Key-words: 1. Taping 2. Musculoskeletal 3. Therapeutic

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