

Date: January 25, 2007
Author: Matthew Hogg

Electromagnetic Radiation Blocking Fabric Reduces Fibromyalgia Pain

New study finds that a special fabric called Farabloc can effectively reduce the pain felt by fibromyalgia sufferers.

Fibromyalgia is a complex illness with a wide array of debilitating symptoms, but that one that stands out is pain. Described as a musculoskeletal pain disorder, sufferers experience pain, often excruciating, at various 'tender points' around the body. The pain comes from the soft tissues of the body, the muscles, ligaments, and tendons, and sufferers describe it as deep muscular aching, throbbing, shooting, and stabbing. Sensations of intense burning are also common.

When asked to explain what living with fibromyalgia is like many sufferers will use the analogy of how you would feel after running a marathon when not in tip top condition. It feels like muscles have been pulled and stretched or the body has suffered some intense physical trauma.

The pain of the condition can be crippling with those afflicted often being bedridden and unable to carry out what would usually be considered to be simple everyday tasks. It is vital therefore for fibromyalgia patients to be able to get effect pain relief so that their suffering can be reduced and their ability to function can be improved.

Traditional treatment of pain in fibromyalgia usually involves the use of pain medications, from over-the-counter varieties such as aspirin, acetaminophen, and ibuprofen, to prescription-strength pain pills like narcotics (opiates), codeine, Vicodin, Darvocet, Percocet, and Ultram. In addition, some doctors will also prescribe anti-inflammatory medicines and muscle-relaxants to help reduce the pain. These medicines are often very effective but as well all drugs, they have their side-effects. Fibromyalgia patients are also more likely to have conditions such as irritable bowel syndrome and multiple chemical sensitivity than the general population, so may not be able to tolerate drug therapies.

Now there may be a drug-free alternative for fibromyalgia sufferers, that initial published research has demonstrated to effectively reduce pain in the condition. The research published on January 11th in the respected medical journal, *Clinical Rheumatology*, studied a special fabric known as Farabloc which has previously been shown to benefit athletes, enhancing muscle health, soothing aches and strains, and promoting rapid healing.

The research was a collaborative effort between Dr. Gerhard L. Bach of Germany, who collected the clinical data, and Dr. Douglas B. Clement, Professor Emeritus, Division of Sports Medicine at the University of British Columbia in Canada, who compiled and analyzed the data. Professor Bach who has an academic affiliation with the Department of Medicine/Rheumatology at the University of Munich, conducted the trial of Farabloc at Clinic Auerbach, Bensheim.

Farabloc is made by Farabloc Development Corporation of British Columbia. The Farabloc fabric was developed by the company's president, Frieder Kempe, who was initially looking for a way to help his father, an amputee suffering from phantom limb pain. Kempe developed from ideas based on the work of Michael Faraday, the 19th Century British scientist, hence the name Farabloc.

According to the products website, Farabloc is made up of a series of ultra thin steel fibres woven into a nylon fabric. The company says Farabloc works by blocking high frequency electromagnetic radiation allowing the low frequency radiation to pass through. They cite research indicating that this effects the durability and stability of connective tissue cell membranes.

The Farabloc fabric can be used the way any other fabric would be. It can be made into wraps to be placed directly over sore or injured areas on the body, or it can be made into garments such as jackets, socks, gloves, or blankets.

For the fibromyalgia research Dr. Bach used nightgowns made from the Farabloc fabric and compared them to placebo nightgowns made from regular fabric. The research actually consisted of 2 individual studies carried out over a period of 4 years. In the phase 1 study 126 fibromyalgia in-patients at a rheumatologic and rehabilitation hospital were randomly assigned to wear either a Farabloc nightgown or a placebo nightgown. Of the 126, 42 were given Farabloc gowns and 84 placebos. The patients wore the gowns for 8 hours per night for 20 nights. In the stage 2 study 25 fibromyalgia patients were again randomly assigned to either a Farabloc nightgown or a placebo nightgown, but this time after 10 of 21 days of the trial, the gowns were switched without the patients knowledge.

Before the studies began the patients were each assessed to determine the severity of their pain, the frequency they experienced pain, and the amount of paracetamol they needed to control the pain. These factors were then reassessed halfway through the study period and again at the end.

The results of both studies revealed that the Farabloc was consistently superior to the placebo at reducing pain in the fibromyalgia patients. In the phase 1 study the patients wearing the Farabloc nightgowns experienced significant reductions in all 3 of the indicators that were assessed. In the phase 2 study the patients who wore the placebo nightgown for the first 10 days and the Farabloc gown until the end of the study showed similar improvements.

Commenting on previous Farabloc research Dr. Clement said "I have been involved in sports medicine for many years, and I never came across a product like Farabloc. This electromagnetic shielding fabric not only relieves pain but also reduces inflammation. Farabloc is an effective drug free alternative for pain reduction and injury recovery."

Farabloc Development Corporation president Frieder Kempe has talked about how rewarding it is to see his theories confirmed said "It's almost overwhelming to think of how much relief this product has provided for so many people."

Dr. Bach and Dr. Clement have acknowledged that there were some limitations to their study, notably the single-blind rather than double-blind design (Dr. Bach knew which patients were using the Farabloc nightgowns and which weren't). That said, the results would seem to be quite convincing, especially when combined with the previous studies involving different kinds of pain.

Farabloc could be an exciting alternative to conventional drug therapies for fibromyalgia pain as well as for other alternative therapies such as massage, exercise etc. It has the advantage of being free from side-effects and without contraindications. Drugs may not be an option for some fibromyalgia sufferers due to sensitivity and intolerances, so something like Farabloc could be the perfect alternative. It is available from the Farabloc website in a variety of forms from long and short sleeve shirts to wraps and strappings aimed at specific joints and muscles. After having a look at the store the prices initially seem quite high but over the life of the garment they will probably compare very favourably with drug therapy over the same period.

On a final note, the internet is flooded with websites claiming to offer magnet and electromagnetic field (EMF) shielding based devices for the relief of pain and other ailments. Some of the claims are backed up by scientific evidence and some are not. Since many of these devices are sold for vast amounts of money it is wise to investigate whether a particular product has been subjected to controlled clinical trials that found significant benefits, such as the Farabloc study reported on here.