

## **Floatation Therapy for Chronic Neck Pain**

### **Case study: The Value of Floatation Therapy for Chronic Neck Pain**

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## **Abstract**

### **Objective**

Chronic neck pain is now a normal condition as a result of modern day society fueled by stress, extended hours in front of a computer, and cell phone usage. Our medical society has both misunderstood and mismanaged chronic neck pain and created an opioid crisis. The threat of reprimand from medical boards has encouraged pain management professionals to seek alternative methods of co-managing the serial mind and body implications of chronic pain.

The objective of this case study is to observe the effects of four (4) weeks of floatation therapy upon chronic neck pain and the collateral effects of sleep, depression and anxiety. A second objective is to determine if there is any difference between floating one (1) vs. two (2) times a week for the same time period.

### **Background**

To initiate this case study, participants were sought through an online screening process based on the following criteria:

- (a) neck pain for more than 3 years (self-rated as greater than 5 on a numerical 0-10 pain scale with 0=none and 10 =extreme pain );
- (b) no prior history of floating;
- (c) no surgery for this condition;
- (d) not taking opioids, and
- (e) not currently receiving medical treatment or alternative medicine intervention including injections or therapy.

Of almost 200 applicants, only 21 fit the criteria and were accepted into the study. Of those 21 people, 10 elected to participate nine (9) females and one (1) male. They were then randomly divided into two equal groups.

Some or all of the participants indicated radiating pain or numbness, anxiety, depression, sleep issues, and various activities of affect on work and daily living. In the past, all of the participants tried a variety of pain management and lifestyle approaches, other than floating.

## **Method**

The intervention for this case study involved “floating” in a 9’ long x 5’ wide fiberglass tank with a hinged lid, shaped like a large egg and filled with 175 gallons (10” deep) of a salt solution. This solution contains 1000 pounds of medical grade Epsom salt, or magnesium sulfate (MgSO<sub>4</sub>) and is maintained at skin temperature (94 degrees F). The tank is within a private room containing a shower. To “float” the individual disrobes, showers, inserts earplugs, turns off the overhead room light, then climbs inside the tank which has an internal light and music controls. The individual closes the float tank lid and then transitions onto a supine (face up) position and begins to float effortlessly.

The study lasted four (4) weeks in duration<sup>1</sup> and involved two random groupings of four participants per group. Group A floated once a week for four weeks for a total of 4 floats. Group B floated twice a week for four weeks, for a total of 8 floats. A daily subjective survey was completed by each individual, using a numeric scale on a 0-10 continuum with descriptors. This month long daily survey was initiated on day (1) one of the study, regardless of the day of their first float in week(1) one. For purposes of comparison, a baseline survey with the same questions was completed by the participants prior to their first float.

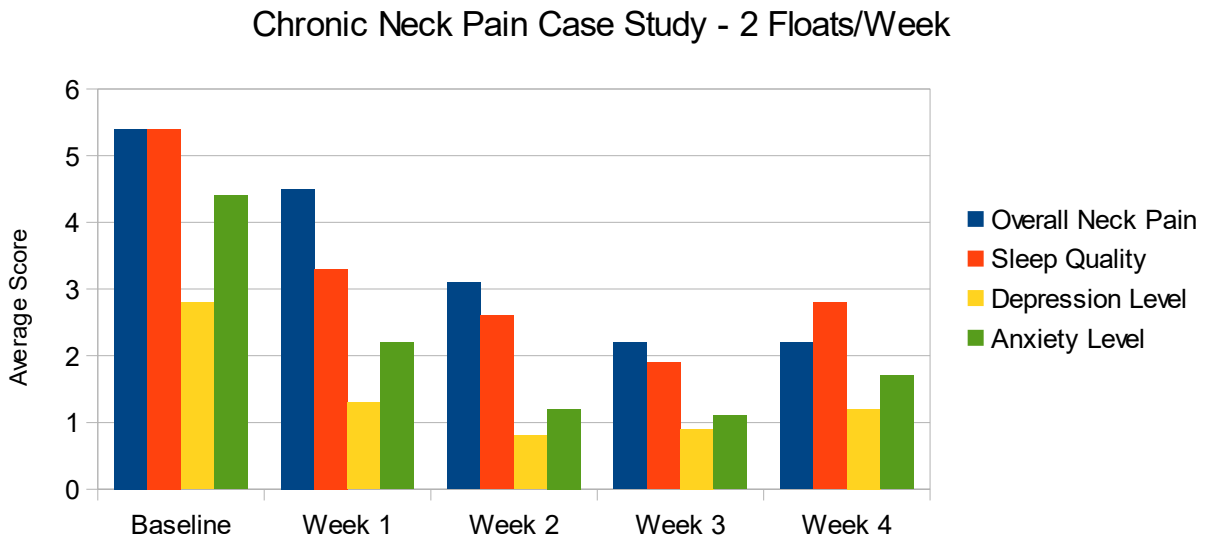
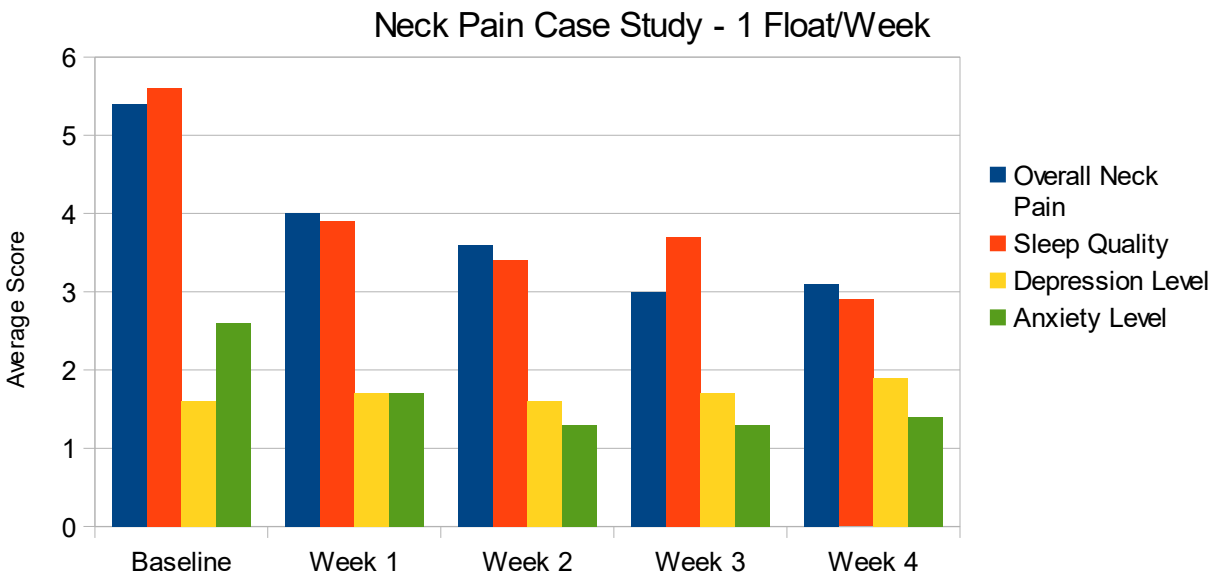
There was no interaction with the participants during the course of the study. There was no cost for the participants and there was no financial gain from The Float Zone, where the case study took place. There are no other disclosures.

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The four week time frame was chosen to reflect a common period of most therapeutic approaches, such as chiropractic or physical therapy to establish if a protocol is working.

# Results



## Overall Pain

Evaluating the intervention of floating on pain levels, both groups made improvements.

**Group A**(1 float/week) improved **43%**. **Group B** (2 floats/week) improved **65%**.

Comparing Group A to Group B, there is a 22% difference representing a **51% greater improvement for Group B over Group A.**

### Quality of Sleep

**Group A** had a **48% improvement**. **Group B** had a **64% improvement**.

Comparing Group A to Group B, there is a 16% difference reflecting a **37% improvement of Group B over Group A**.

### Depression Level

Evaluating the intervention of floatation therapy on depression associated with chronic neck pain, **Group A** actually had a negative 18% improvement (basically unchanged).

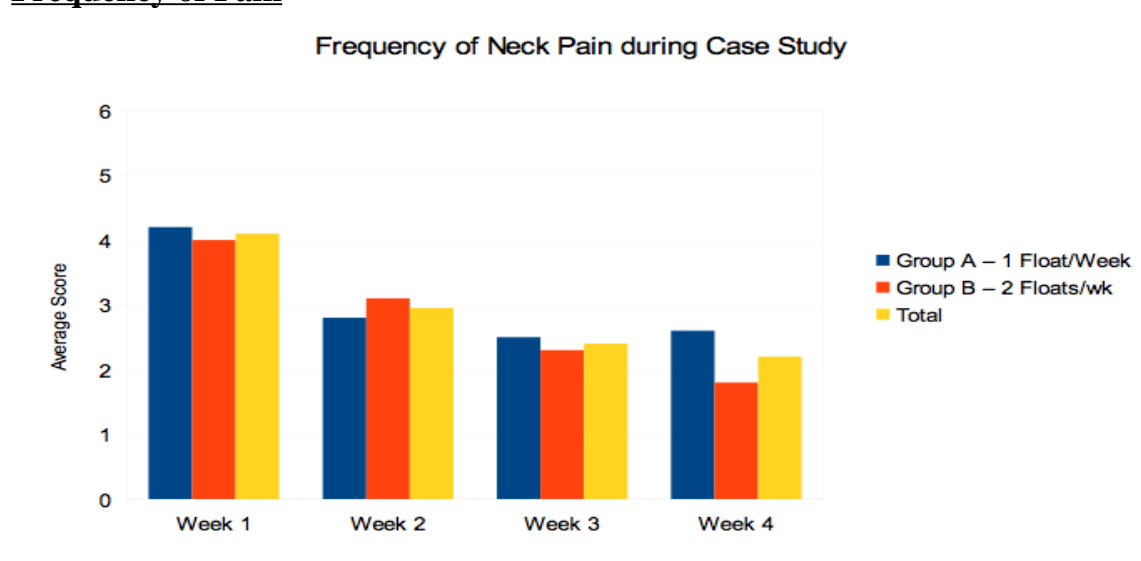
**Group B** improved **39%**.

This demonstrates a 57% difference between Group A and B or a **100% improvement of Group B over Group A**.

### Anxiety Level

Evaluating the intervention of anxiety related to chronic neck pain, **Group A** improved **46%** and **Group B** improved **68%**. This is reflective of a 22% difference between the groups and a **48% improvement of Group B over Group A**.

### Frequency of Pain



Evaluating the frequency chronic neck pain, **Group A** improved **38%**. **Group B** improved **55%**. This is reflective of a 17% difference between the groups and a **45% improvement of Group B vs Group A**.

### Conclusion

Floatation therapy, otherwise known as floating, has a direct and positive effect on reducing chronic neck pain, and improving associated sleep quality, anxiety and depression. Float frequency does make a difference, whereas floating twice weekly has a more pronounced effect than one float per week, for a period of 4 weeks. Patients, medical professionals and alternative health care providers should consider floatation therapy by itself and in tandem with other mind/body approaches to manage chronic neck pain.