Soft Laser Treatment of Warts: A Sophisticated Placebo

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Sir,

Multiple treatments methods have been proposed for warts. Reliable practical approaches include cryotherapy, curettage, and various topically applied keratolytics. Recently, soft lasers have become increasingly popular among general practitioners in Europe, for various illnesses, including warts. Since the rationale for this method seems unclear, we have carried out a controlled study of this method.

50 warts (common warts of the hands or plantar warts) seen in 28 patients from 3 to 64 years of age have

been submitted to either irradiation (group 1) or sham treatment (group 2). Laser or sham laser treatment were delivered for 4 min on each lesion, on 3 consecutive days.

The device (Curalaser P2°, SB Medical Equipment, Belgium) was previously tested in the laboratory of Experimental Physics (Prof. Roch and Prof. Ruamp, University of Bordeaux I).

Pulsed infrared emission (wavelength: 904 nm) ranging from a few milliwatts to 30 mW could be detected. The source was an As-Ga diode.

The outcome was evaluated by a phone call 2 months after completion of therapy. Only completely healed lesions were taken into account in the 'healed' category. Data were analysed using, the χ^2 test with Yates' correction.

Our data suggest that soft laser may act as a sophisticated placebo, since the rate of healing was low and not significantly different between our two groups ($\chi^2 = 0.05$, $0.80 < p < 0.90$). Since soft laser is time-consuming and lacks efficacy, we think it should not be recommended for the treatment of warts.