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THE USE OF EXTRACORPOREAL SHOCK WAVES IN THE TREATMENT OF HEEL PAIN

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From September 1995 until October 1997, a total of 88 patients suffering from plantar calcaneal spur and plantar fasciitis, who had previously undergone conventional therapy without success, were treated with a lithotripter (MINILITH SL1) manufactured by STORZ. Before extracorporeal shock wave therapy was started, the patients received the obligatory minimum pretreatment in the form of insole supports, oral nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) and/or oral steroid injections as well as physical therapy.

In the course of this study, the intensity of pain was assessed before and after the treatment as well as three, six and 12 months after completion of the therapy. The intensity of pain was classified on the basis of the visual analogue scale (0 – 10). All patients underwent an average of 3.5 treatment sessions. Local anaesthesia was dispensed with in 70 % of the treatments.

After completion of the treatment, 18 % of the patients declared to be entirely free from pain, whereas 42 % stated that their condition had improved considerably (≥ 5 on the visual analogue scale). After three months, 24 % of the patients treated were totally free from pain and 40 % declared that their condition had improved significantly. Six months after the therapy, 30 % of the patients were entirely free from pain and 45 % had experienced a substantial improvement in their condition. These results proved to be unchanged one year after completion of the treatment.

No serious side effects were detected as a result of the therapy.

In conclusion, it can be said that the use of extracorporeal shock wave therapy (ESWT) in the treatment of heel pain is a highly successful alternative therapy method even for patients who were previously subjected to conventional treatment without success.