



ALPINE STREAMS FOR KNEIPP HYDROTHERAPY

Background:

Kneipp water applications are among the therapies commonly used in the field of naturopathy. The list of indications for Kneipp hydrotherapy is long yet the scientific evidence is hardly explored by clinical studies. In many cases its application is based upon experiential judgment. Core elements of Kneipp's hydrotherapeutic treatments are treading water, hot and cold half-baths and full baths, contrasting baths, steam treatments, wraps and compresses and, most importantly, cold gushing water briefly applied to various parts of the body. Moderately intensive daily physical activities also form part of Kneipp hydrotherapy.

Medical evidence:

There is insufficient evidence from clinical studies on the efficacy of Kneipp hydrotherapy treatments. But, as a therapeutic add-on option for different diseases, hydrotherapy according to the Kneipp method has become more and more a topic of scientific research. Treatment successes have for example been found for Kneipp hydrotherapy as an add-on in the concomitant treatment of dementia. There is sound evidence that cold water applied locally to the face and neck region is able to provoke significant improvement in cognitive abilities or in cases of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Hydrotherapy in general shows therapeutic benefits concerning balance, increasing mobility and quality of life for people with movement disorders.

Studies of medical evidence:

- Indication: movement disorders in cases of Parkinson's disease (Rocha et al., 2015): evidence level Ia
- Resource: Alpine cold water (Doering et al., 2001): evidence level Ib
- Indication: health prevention measures; awareness of individual health resources (Eckert & Anheyer, 2018): evidence level IV
- Indication: quality of life; treatment of side effects of breast cancer treatment (Hack et al., 2015): evidence level IV

Conclusion:

There are indications that Kneipp hydrotherapy can be a useful add-on treatment for people with different disease patterns. However, clinical trials are required that compare e.g. therapies of varying duration and frequency to clarify the associated risks and benefits for each indication.

Health tourism potential:

- Development of seasonal concepts with Alpine streams at the centre always bearing in mind regional conditions and compatibility with prevailing values.
- Establishing appropriate partnerships.
- Offer health experiences that revolve around cold water.
- Reactivation of existing Kneipp facilities or opening of new facilities.

