OBJECTIVES: The objective of this study was to evaluate the effects and the tolerability of mud packs and thermal baths in a group of patients affected with this disease. METHODS: Twenty-four patients with spondylitis and Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis, treated with 5-ASA or sulfasalazine, were randomised and assessed by an investigator independent from the spa staff: 12 were submitted to a cycle of mud-bath treatment (12 mud packs and 12 thermal baths over a period of two weeks) and 12 were enrolled as controls. Patients were evaluated by BASDAI, BASFI, BAS-G and VAS for back pain before, at the end of a cycle of mud-bath treatment, and after 12 and 24 weeks. C reactive protein serum levels detected by high sensitivity nephelometric method and gut symptoms evaluated by CDAI or Powell-Tuck index were assessed at the same time periods. RESULTS: A significant reduction of clinical evaluation indices of spondylitis was observed at the end of the cycle of mud-bath treatment. BASDAI50 improvement remained significant until the end of the follow-up (24 weeks). C reactive protein serum levels didn't show significant changes. No patient referred any gut symptom exacerbation. No significant changes in clinical evaluation indices, in IBD activity indices and in CRP serum levels were observed in the control group. CONCLUSION: Mud-bath treatment in patients with spondylitis associated with inflammatory bowel disease is well tolerated and may improve spinal symptoms and function for several months.

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