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Aerobic exercise in fibromyalgia: a practical review.

Thomas EN¹, Blotman F.

+ Author information

Abstract

The objective of the study was to determine the current evidence to support guidelines for aerobic exercise (AE) and fibromyalgia (FM) in practice, and to outline specific research needs in these areas. Data sources consisted of a PubMed search, 2007 Cochrane Data Base Systematic review, 2008 Ottawa panel evidence-based clinical practice guidelines, as well as additional references found from the initial search. Study selection included randomized clinical trials that compared an aerobic-only exercise intervention (land or pool based) with an untreated control, a non-exercise intervention or other exercise programs in patients responding to the 1990 American College of Rheumatology criteria for FM. The following outcome data were obtained: pain, tender points, perceived improvement in FM symptoms such as the Fibromyalgia Impact Questionnaire total score (FIQ), physical function, depression (e.g., Beck Depression Inventory, FIQ subscale for depression), fatigue and sleep were extracted from 19 clinical trials that considered the effects of aerobic-only exercise in FM patients. Data synthesis shows that there is moderate evidence of important benefit of aerobic-only exercise in FM on physical function and possibly on tender points and pain. It appears to be sufficient evidence to support the practice of AE as a part of the multidisciplinary management of FM. However, future studies must be more adequately sized, homogeneously assessed, and monitored for adherence, to draw definitive conclusions.

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