How to exercise people with chronic fatigue syndrome: evidence-based practice guidelines.

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Source

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Abstract

BACKGROUND:

Despite the large number of studies emphasizing the effectiveness of graded exercise therapy (GET) and cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) for people with chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS), clinicians are left wondering how exactly to apply exercise therapy to their patients with CFS. The aim of this literature review is to identify the appropriate exercise modalities (i.e. exercise duration, mode, number of treatment sessions, session length, duration of treatment, exercise intensity and whether or not to apply home exercise program) for people with CFS.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

All studies that were identified through electronic databases (PubMed and PEDro) were assessed for methodological quality by using selection criteria (Delphi score).

RESULTS:

In this literature review, 12 studies fulfilled all study requirements. One study had a low methodological quality. The parameters used in the GET and CBT interventions were divided into subgroups: (i) time or symptom contingent, (ii) exercise frequency and (iii) exercise modality.

CONCLUSION:

The lack of uniformity in outcome measures and CFS diagnostic criteria make it difficult to compare the findings across studies. Based on the available evidence, exercise therapy for people with CFS should be aerobic and must comprise of 10-11 sessions spread over a period of 4-5 months. A time-contingent approach is preferred over a symptom-contingent way of exercising. In addition, people with CFS can perform home exercises five times a week with an initial duration of 5-15 min per exercise session. The exercise duration can be gradually increased up to 30 min.


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