



Service Priorities and Programmes
Electronic Presentations

Convention ID: 225

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Post title: Occupational Therapist II, QEH, KCC

Service Enhancement: Effects of Health Qigong (Ba Duan Jin) on Disease Activity, Physical Function, Self-perceived Health Status and Quality of Life of People with Rheumatoid Arthritis in Short and Long Term Follow-up

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Keywords:

Rheumatoid Arthritis

Health Qigong

Ba Duan Jin

Occupational Therapy

Effects

Introduction

Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) is a chronic condition which affects physical functioning and quality of life. There is still disparity noted between improvement of disease activity and progression of disability. Complementary therapy health Qigong (Ba Duan Jin) is a culture based and mind-body exercise that improves physical fitness and overall well-being.

Objectives

This is a retrospective single group study aimed at exploring Ba Duan Jin in RA impacted on disease activity, physical fitness, self-perceived health status and quality of life in a quantitative and qualitative method.

Methodology

Patients were referred to the Occupational Therapy Department of Queen Elizabeth Hospital for Joint Protection Program. Inclusion criteria were a diagnosis of RA by a rheumatologist, age 18-70 years, stable medical treatment for 3 months or more and ability to walk indoors without a walking aid. Twelve participants with RA were recruited into the Ba Duan Jin group, once weekly for 5 weeks. Participants were advised to continue practice once a day and 6 days a week. Outcome measures included disease activity, physical performance test (upper-limb flexibility, grip strength, strength and endurance in lower-limb and balance, self-reported health status (Chinese version of Arthritis Impact Measurement Scale 2) and quality of life (SF-36). Assessment was done prior to the start of the Ba Duan Jin group, in 3 month and 6 month follow-up.

Result

Nine participants (7 females, age 39-65) completed the Ba Duan Jin group and attended all follow-up reassessment. Nil statistically significant changes were seen for the results of disease activity including numeric pain rating scale for overall pain level

($p=0.55$) and 28-tender ($p=0.81$)/ swollen ($p=0.22$) joint count. Practicing Ba Duan Jin was suggested to be safe and did not exacerbate symptoms. Statistically significant improvement was found in lower limb strength (Timed-Strands test) at 3 month ($p=0.02$) and 6 month ($p=0.04$) follow-up compared to baseline. Statistically significant positive effect was also found in self-perceived physical role (SF-36 sub-scale) between 3 month and 6 month follow-up ($p=0.04$). From satisfaction survey at the end of group, all participants felt their leg muscles were getting stronger and their mind was relaxing. Nearly 90% of participants agreed that Ba Duan Jin was easy to learn in group and they would like to continue practice.