



Service Priorities and Programmes
Electronic Presentations

Convention ID: 510

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Pilot Study on the Benefits of Health Qigong LiuZiJue Practice for Patients with Mild Cognitive Impairment

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Keywords:

Mild Cognitive Impairment

Health Qigong

Introduction

There are a growing number of studies pointing out that physical activity may delay onset and progression of dementia and cognitive impairment in elderly. Cross-sectional and longitudinal data have demonstrated that physically active people have a lower risk of developing Alzheimer's disease and related cognitive disorders when compared with sedentary people. Therefore, promoting physical activities and ensuring compliance to physical activity are important intervention media for elderly with cognitive impairment in order to slow down the progression of cognitive decline.

Objectives

To determine whether physical activity of low to moderate intensity such as Health Qigong, is beneficial for people with mild cognitive impairment To determine whether Health Qigong is an appropriate treatment medium for people with mild cognitive impairment to establish exercise habit

Methodology

Health Qigong LiuZiJue is chosen as a treatment medium for people with mild cognitive impairment. It is one of the common forms of Chinese Qigong with low to moderate intensity which involves the coordination of movement and breathing patterns with specific sounds. Education on Health Qigong is conducted by means of group therapy with 6-8 subjects. The group consists of six sessions on the movement patterns weekly, followed by two review sessions after a month and three months. Meanwhile, educational materials are provided to facilitate regular practice for home program. Patients with MMSE score ≥ 19 and MoCA score ≥ 18 , ambulatory but have no regular exercise habit are recruited. Those with visual or auditory hallucination and uncontrolled chronic medical conditions are excluded. Practice frequency log as reported by patient is used as a measurement of compliance. "Physical Health" and "Memory" domains in QOL-AD are used measure the patients' perceived changes on own physical and cognitive function.

Result

One out of the four subjects in pilot study group had established daily exercise habit while the other three had increased exercise from 0 to 1-2 times a week. The sum of

score of the group in “Physical Health” domain of QOL-AD was maintained at 9/16 and that in “Memory” domain had improved from 5/16 to 7/16 (The higher the score, the better the domain function is). In this pilot study, mild improvement in perceived cognitive function was noted. The result is encouraging as all participants had started to establish regular pattern of exercise. It is a prominent motivating factor for patients to sustain the exercise habit in order to attain long term effect on cognitive function. Further review session and on-going data collection will be arranged to investigate objective changes on cognitive function.