



Service Priorities and Programmes
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East-meet-west integrated exercise for patients with dementia

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Introduction

Dementia is one of the major causes of disability and dependency among elderly. Although cognitive decline is the major symptom in people with dementia, physical mobility function is also affected at a later stage. Exercise has been reported in various studies in improving physical function and possibly in cognition in people with dementia. Fitness Qigong is a traditional Chinese body-mind exercise to improve health. Previous researches about Fitness Qigong demonstrated various beneficial effects. However, few studies have examined the effects of Fitness Qigong on people with dementia.

Objectives

To examine the effects of Fitness Qigong - Ba Duan Jin program on cognitive function, standing balance, endurance and physical functioning of elderly with dementia at Psychogeriatric Day Hospital.

Methodology

Nineteen elderly diagnosed with dementia participated in a 60-minute Fitness Qigong class once a week for 12 weeks. A pretest-posttest design was conducted to investigate the effects. Outcome measures for physical domain included Timed Up and Go Test (TUG) which evaluated mobility level, Functional Reach Test (FRT) which evaluated standing balance and 30 seconds Sit-to-Stand Test which performed as an indicator for muscle endurance. For the mental domain, Mini-Mental State Test (MMSE) was used to evaluate cognitive functioning. Wilcoxon Signed-rank Test was used to analyze the result.

Result

Twelve females and seven males with mean age of 80.32 ± 4.46 completed the program. Statistically significant improvements were found in both physical and mental domains. Physically, the mean of TUG was improved from 16.05 ± 6.40 sec. to 13.93 ± 6.13 sec. ($p < 0.05$), the mean of FRT was increased from 16.11 ± 6.54 cm to 18.58 ± 2.11 cm ($p < 0.05$), the mean of 30 seconds Sit-to-Stand Test was increased from 7.16 ± 1.50 counts to 8.74 ± 1.56 counts ($p < 0.05$). Mentally, mean scores of MMSE

was increased from 15.74 ± 3.62 to 17.26 ± 3.49 ($p < 0.05$). Fitness Qigong is a kind of Chinese style exercises which is familiar to Chinese elderly. Ba Duan Jin program has only eight postures which are easy to learn and remember. It is inexpensive and does not required spacious area to perform. The positive results suggested it could be an option for elderly with dementia to improve cognitive and physical functioning. Further study is recommended to validate the effectiveness of Fitness Qigong program in improving physical and mental functions in this clientele.