(P19) EFFECT OF A SINGLE BOUT OF INTERMITTENT VERSUS CONTINUOUS WALKING ON PERCEPTIONS OF FATIGUE IN PEOPLE WITH MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

H. Karpatkin

Hunter College Program in Physical Therapy, Brooklyn, NY

Background: Fatigue is a symptom commonly seen in individuals with multiple sclerosis (MS) and may limit their ability to benefit from physical therapy. An exercise program that decreases the amount of fatigue a person with MS experiences as a result of the exercise may lead to a greater amount of exercise performed and a greater likelihood of realizing the benefits of exercise. Objectives: The purpose of this study was to determine whether subjective feelings of fatigue differ in people with MS depending on whether they engage in intermittent or continuous exercise. It was hypothesized that people with MS who use an intermittent exercise program would have decreased subjective feelings of fatigue compared with those who engage in continuous exercise. Methods: Using a repeated-measures, crossover, within-subjects design, a sample of 30 ambulatory individuals with Expanded Disability Status Scale (EDSS) scores between 2 and 6.5 performed 6 minutes of either continuous or intermittent walking. Fatigue was measured on the Visual Analog Scale of Fatigue (VASF). It was expected that people with MS who performed the 6-minute walk in an intermittent manner would have lower scores on the VASF compared with those who performed the 6-minute walk continuously. Results: Mean self-rating of fatigue went from 43.53 to 68.73 when the participants walked for 6 minutes continuously, representing an increase of 25.2 on the VASF scale. In contrast, the mean fatigue score went from 48.03 to 57.20 when the participants walked the 6 minutes intermittently, representing an increase of only 9.17 points on the VASF. This indicated that the participants found the intermittent walking to be significantly less fatiguing than the continuous walking. No effect was noted for disease severity, duration, or participant mood. Conclusions: Clinicians are often reluctant to treat individuals with MS because of the lack of an established protocol compared with other neurologic disorders. This study provides evidence to support the use of intermittent exercise in people with MS, which may be tolerated better than continuous exercise based on subjective reporting.

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