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Project title

Functional and Psychosocial Effect of Health Qigong in Patients with Chronic Non-specific Low Back Pain: A Phase II Randomized Controlled Trial

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Introduction

Chronic non-specific LBP is a significant problem in industrialized societies which is associated with various physical, emotional, and psychosocial dysfunctions that eventually cause deterioration in the quality of life. Health Qigong (HQG) follows the philosophy of “qi” regulation, which is described as harmonizing mind and body and activating self-healing capacities. The principles of slow body movement serves as an aerobic exercise and controlled breathing to achieve relaxation. Although HQG has been used for the prevention and the treatment of pain, few randomized controlled trials (RCT) have been conducted to investigate its efficacy especially in the musculoskeletal conditions.

Objectives

To study the effect of Health Qi-gong (HQG) program on patients with chronic non-specific LBP until 4 weeks after discharge

Methodology

A 2 (group) x 3 (time) mixed-model randomized controlled trial (RCT) was employed. Seventy-two patient with non-specific LBP were randomized to the HQG intervention group (n = 38) and functional rehab control group (n = 34). Assessments were conducted by blinded assessors at baseline, discharge from intervention, and follow-up at 4 weeks. Primary outcomes involved physical and functional domains i.e. pain score, Oswestry Disability Index (ODI), and Sit and Reach flexibility test; and secondary outcomes involved psychosocial attributes measurement i.e. Pain Catastrophizing Scale (PCS), Pain Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (PSEQ) and Hospital Anxiety and Depression Score (HADS).

Result

Recent randomized controlled non-inferiority trial showed that Qigong was not proven to be non-inferior to exercise therapy in the treatment of chronic low back pain (Blodt, et al, 2015). In our study, a randomized controlled superiority trial was adopted, which showed (1) significant difference in the primary outcomes measuring on pain score and lower back / hamstring flexibility between the HQG and FR group; and (2) significant result in the secondary outcomes measuring on depressive mood and perceived self-efficacy in HQG intervention group only; suggested that the mind-body interventions which have greater influence on pain acceptance and body awareness. HQG has demonstrated some positive effect for chronic LBP management which could be incorporated as an adjunctive therapy to convention treatment.