



Aging & Chronic Diseases

Exercise training in progressive Multiple Sclerosis (MS)

Does exercise training have a positive effect on function, fatigue and quality of life in progressive MS?

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Exercise training can be beneficial in Multiple Sclerosis (MS). However, few studies have looked at the effects in individuals with progressive MS, whose severe mobility impairment causes limited opportunities to engage in traditional exercise modalities. A possible alternative form of exercise is body weight-supported treadmill training (BWSTT), which has been shown to be safe and well tolerated, but rarely available in community settings. Therefore, an adapted form of BWSTT was included, namely total-body recumbent stepper training (TBRST); exercise on a recumbent cross-trainer. This study aimed to assess the safety and participant experience with BWSTT and TBRST, alongside the effects on function, fatigue and health-related quality of life (HRQoL).

12 participants with progressive MS were randomized into either a BWSTT or TBRST group. Both groups received exercise training for 3 sessions of 30 minutes each week, over a period of 12 weeks. The outcome measures - safety, participant experience and HRQoL - were assessed using questionnaires, and physical functioning was assessed using functional tests.



Both exercise modalities were safe and resulted in positive participant experiences, with slightly more favorable experiences for TBRST over BWSTT. There were no significant intervention effects on functional ability. Both interventions showed positive but non-significant effects on mental and physical HRQoL. The results of this study suggest that TBRST and BWSTT are feasible exercise modalities for people with progressive MS and severe mobility impairment.

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