



Association for
Palliative Medicine

Article of the Month

January 2017

Impact of Different Exercise Programs on Severe Fatigue in Patients Undergoing Anticancer Treatment. A Randomized Controlled Trial

Markus K. Schuler, MD, MSc, Leopold Hentschel, Dipl-Psych, Wadim Kisel, Michael Kramer, Dipl-Psych, Felicitas Lenz, BSc, Beate Hornemann, Dipl-Psych, Julia Hoffmann, Stephan Richter, MD, Gerhard Ehninger, MD, Martin Bornhauser, MD, and Frank Kroschinsky, MD

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This randomised controlled trial looked at the impact of a structured individual sports program on fatigue in patients with advanced cancer (undergoing curative and palliative treatments) over 12 and 24 weeks. They found no significant difference in general fatigue at 12 weeks but a significant reduction in mental fatigue both at 12 and at 24 weeks for the groups taught the exercise program and worsening of fatigue in the control group. There was a non-significant advantage for the group that had twice weekly therapist supervision as well as the exercise program but as these patients had the worst baseline scores of fatigue this cannot be attributed to the supervision. Although their numbers are small and the study was not blinded, this study adds to the evidence for the advantages of physical therapy in improving fatigue in a heterogenous sample of patients, many of whom were having palliative treatment.

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Evidence still insufficient that advance care documentation leads to engagement of healthcare professionals in end-of-life discussions: A systematic review

Ebony Lewis, Magnolia Cardona-Morrell, Kok Y Ong, Steven A Trankle and Ken Hillman

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This systematic review looked for evidence that the presence of Advance Care Documentation (ACD) enhanced clinician's involvement in initiating End of Life (EOL) discussions and whether that engagement was perceived or measured as effective. 24 studies were included involving over 23,000 participants with most of the studies being qualitative in nature. The review only found one well designed cohort study that provided high level evidence of a statistical significant association indicating that the ACD prompted an EOLC discussion. The authors' conclusion is that the evidence to date cannot provide an answer to the effectiveness of ACD on triggering conversations about EOL wishes despite most studies finding staff had a positive attitude to the use of ACD as instruments to improve communication.

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Prepared by Helen McGee, on behalf of the APM Science committee