Experiences from a clinical randomized study of exercise for patients with pulmonary embolism.

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Patient experiences

• There is very limited knowledge about how a lung embolism affects patients’ everyday life.
The patients are saying

- What is a lung embolism?
- Which symptoms do I need to be aware of in the future?
- How do I deal with my shortness of breath and fatigue?
- When can I start working?
- Can I do exercise?
- I am scared of getting a new lung embolism!
- How does every day life work out after a lung embolism?
- Who keeps track of me?
- Can I die from a lung embolism?
Patients with medically treated pulmonary embolism recruited at 5 Danish hospitals (N = 140)

Baseline measurement and randomisation

Exercise group
N = 70 patients

Control group
N = 70 patients

8 weeks home-based exercise programme
3 telephone consultations with physio.

1st follow-up, 2 months after baseline

2nd follow-up, 6 months after baseline

Pragmatic multicenter RCT
Materials and methods

**Control group (Usual care)**
- 2-5 days of hospitalisation
- Information about the condition, the anticoagulant treatment and future prevention
- Out-patient visits for adjustment of medication
- Concomitant care allowed

**Exercise group**
- Usual care
- 8 weeks homebased exercise programme:
  - Individual session with physiotherapist
  - 3 x 30-60 min weekly exercise of moderate intensity with 3-4 short intervals of high intensity.
  - Telephone consultations after 1, 2 and 4 weeks
Materials and methods

• Primary outcome:
  – Physical capacity (Incremental Shuttle Walk test)

• Secondary outcomes:
  – Quality of life (Pulmonary Embolism Quality of Life Questionnaire and EuroQol 5 Dimensions)
  – Number of sick leave days in the past 4 weeks
  – Use of psychotropic drugs in the past 4 weeks
Experience so far

- The patients tolerate and accept the ISWT test and are often surprised by their own abilities.
- We have seen a ceiling effect and other tests should be considered (e.g. watt max test).
- The patients are able to do the programme. Many of them choose a walking programme.
- They need support from the physiotherapist to manage to exercise hard enough.
- The telephone consultation is a valuable and efficient tool.
• No study has previously investigated the effect of an exercise intervention on patient reported outcome measures for patients with pulmonary embolism
• The intervention can easily be organized in hospital settings.
Perspectives

• We expect that the knowledge produced by this study will lead to new recommendations regarding rehabilitation of patients with pulmonary embolism.
Thank you for your attention

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