BALANCE TRAINING (PROPRIOCEPTIVE TRAINING) FOR PATIENTS WITH RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS

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A B S T R A C T

Background

Patients with rheumatoid arthritis may have an increased risk of falls due to impairments in lower-extremity joints, which may result in either mobility, or postural stability problems. There is evidence in the literature suggesting that balance, agility and coordination training techniques can induce changes in lower-extremity muscle activity patterns that result in improvement in dynamic joint stability.

Objective

To assess the effectiveness and safety of balance training (proprioceptive training) to improve functional capacity in patients with rheumatoid arthritis.

Criteria for considering studies for this review

We searched the Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials (CENTRAL) (The Cochrane Library 2008, Issue 4), MEDLINE via PubMed (January 1966 to December 2008), EMBASE (January 1980 to December 2008), LILACS (January 1982 to December 2008), CINAHL (January 1982 to December 2008), PEDro and Scirus (inception to 2008). We also handsearched conference abstracts.

Selection criteria

All eligible randomised controlled trials (RCT) or controlled clinical trials (CCT) comparing balance training (proprioceptive training) with any other intervention or with no intervention.

Data collection and analysis

Two review authors independently assessed titles or abstracts, or both, for inclusion criteria.

Main results

The electronic search identified 864 studies. From this search, 17 studies described general exercises in rheumatoid arthritis patients as the main topic. After analysing them, we observed that the main interventions were exercises to improve muscle strength, endurance, and dynamic exercises (swimming, walking, etc). As we did not find any studies investigating the effects of balance training alone or in combination with other therapies in patients with rheumatoid arthritis, it was not possible to include any data regarding the chosen topic in this systematic review.

Authors' conclusions

There is no research available examining the efficacy of balance training alone in patients with rheumatoid arthritis. The effectiveness and safety of balance training to improve functional capacity of these patients remains unclear. We suggest that future research should give more importance to balance training by either increasing the number and duration of sessions or investigating its efficacy alone.