Headache Medicine

Physical Exercise Strategies as a Therapeutic Alternative for Headache Control: Approaches, Evidence, and Clinical Benefits

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Introduction

Headaches affect numerous people worldwide, causing discomfort and impairing the quality of life. Although many have turned to traditional approaches for headache treatment, the search for effective therapeutic alternatives has grown, with physical exercise emerging as a promising option among these alternatives. In a scenario where pharmacological treatments are still widely adopted for headache control, many individuals are increasingly interested in less invasive approaches with a lower likelihood of side effects. Physical exercises, with their variety of modalities such as aerobics, yoga, and weightlifting, offer an attractive alternative that not only addresses headaches themselves but can also improve the overall health of the individual. As we advance in this field, it is crucial to recognize that physical exercise strategies should not be considered in isolation but as part of an integrated approach to headache treatment.

Objective

The purpose of this study is to investigate the beneficial effects of physical exercise in the treatment of headache disorders.

Methods

This study was conducted through a systematic literature review that addressed the beneficial implications of physical exercise in the control of headache disorders on the PubMed and Scielo databases. The evaluation parameters included English and Portuguese languages, with a publication date range from 2015 to 2023.

Results

It was observed that both therapeutic manipulation and specific exercise significantly reduced the frequency and intensity of headaches, serving as a preventive measure for migraine attacks as they improve the overall quality of life of patients, including improved sleep and reduced stress. The combination of therapies did not show significant superiority but provided additional relief for 10% of the patients. The results demonstrated an effect on moderate and clinically relevant symptoms. These findings support the effectiveness of physical exercise as a valuable therapeutic alternative for headache control and emphasize the importance of integrated approaches in treating this condition.

Conclusion

Therefore, it was observed that physical exercise strategies have proven to be an effective therapeutic alternative in the treatment of headaches, as both therapeutic manipulation and specific exercise resulted in a significant reduction in the frequency and intensity of headaches. Additionally, they contributed to an improvement in the patient's quality of life by reducing stress and enhancing emotional well-being. Furthermore, the combination of therapies, although not statistically superior, offered additional relief to a significant group of patients. These results underscore the importance of considering physical exercise strategies as an integral part of headache treatment. Besides their potential to reduce headaches, physical exercises also have the additional benefit of improving overall health, including cardiovascular health, weight reduction, and muscle strengthening. However, it is crucial to emphasize that each patient is unique, and therapeutic approaches should be personalized to meet individual needs, accompanied by qualified healthcare professionals, as a strategy for the genuine control of this condition.

Keywords: headaches; exercise; quality of life.