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International Conference on
Women's Health, Gynecology & Obstetrics

July 08-10, 2014   DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Chicago-North Shore Conference Center, USA

The effect of conditioning exercise on health status and pain in women's with rheumatoid arthritis

Iran Jahanbin, Mahboobe Hoseini Moghadam, Mohammad Ali Nazarinia and Fariba Ghodsbin
Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, Iran

Introduction: Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a chronic, systemic, inflammatory, progressive disease, with joint synovitis as its main manifestation. Most people with RA tend to avoid physical activity due to their fear of overstraining themselves or pain exacerbations. Avoidance of activities may result in decreased muscle strength which can lead to further inactivity.

Materials and Methods: In this randomized controlled trial sixty-four women diagnosed with RA (aging 23 to 63 years), who had no experience of attending any physical activity program during the six months prior to the study were examined. Participants were randomly assigned into two groups (case and control) 32 individual in each group. Patients in case group underwent 8-week conditioning exercise program while the control group did not receive any exercise program. Health status of patients was measured by AIMS2- SF questionnaire and visual linear scale was used to assess their pain. Health status and pain of all patients were evaluated before and after program.

Results: The results showed that a significant improvement occurs in health status scores at the end of intervention in the experimental group ($P < 0.001$), but no such difference was observed in the control group ($P > 0.05$) compared with the scores obtained before intervention. A significant reduction in pain levels was observed in the experimental group ($P < 0.05$).

Conclusion: It can be concluded that conditioning exercise can reduce pain in patients with rheumatoid arthritis and improve their health status. Therefore it can be considered as an appropriate intervention for such patients.

jahanbii@sums.ac.ir

Gynecol Obstet (Sunnyvale) 2014
ISSN: 2161-0932, Gynecology an open access journal

Gynecology-2014
July 08-10, 2014

Volume 4, Issue 5

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