

The Effects of Exercise Training on Elderly Persons with Cognitive Impairment and Dementia



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Background: With the rapid ageing of the world's population, investigating protective factors that may prevent or delay age-related disorders has become a new public health priority. Amongst the various potential 'protective factors' currently under investigation, physical activity seems to hold promise for the primary and the secondary prevention of dementia.

Methods: This presentation will critically review the evidences in support of the association between exercise and cognitive decline/dementia, as reported by cohort studies or clinical trials and introduce the physical training programme which has been performed in Seongnam Center for Senior Health.

Results: The results of cohort studies show that physical activity is associated with better cognitive function and less cognitive decline in later life although there is only scant evidence suggesting that physical activity may in fact reduce the risk of dementia and Alzheimer's disease. Because the review was based on a very small number of studies and the data were not pooled due to the large variability in intervention programs and methodology. From experiences of Seongnam Center for Senior Health, the physical therapy reported no adverse effects, gave the participants well-being sense and showed some improvement in cognitive functions. More randomized clinical trials must be needed.

Conclusions: The results of observational studies are largely consistent with the hypothesis that physical activity reduces the risk of cognitive decline and dementia in later life. These findings are, however, not as yet adequately supported by data from randomized clinical trials.

Key Words: Alzheimer's disease, Dementia, Exercise, Memory, Prevention