

Comparison between specific exercises and physical therapy for managing patients with ankylosing spondylitis: a meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials

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Setting the scene:

Ankylosing spondylitis is a chronic inflammatory disease with main symptoms of pain, muscle stiffness and decreased spinal mobility. Conventional treatment includes physical therapy, pharmacological treatment and exercises. The purpose of this study was to compare the differences between specific exercises (Pilates, aerobic and aquatic exercises, and the Global Postural Reeducation) and physical therapy (breathing exercises, stretching, strengthening and flexibility) strategies in managing AS.

What did they do?

Medline, PubMed, AMED, Embase, and CINAHL databases were searched. 8 RCTs with AS in experimental groups were included. Article quality was assessed by Jaded quality score and outcome assessment were classified into domains of impairment, activity limitations and participation restriction for AS according to ICF model. The results showed that chest expansion and pulmonary function favored the specific exercises. The outcomes of the Bath Ankylosing Spondylitis Metrology Index, Bath Ankylosing Spondylitis Disease Activity Index, and Bath Ankylosing Spondylitis Functional Index favored physical therapy. Both interventions exhibited low to moderate effects on impairment, activity limitations, and participation restriction.

Takeaway message:

Both physical therapy and specific exercises has it advantage in treating AS. So, a combination of both methods should be used in the treatment program of AS.