
What we already know about the effects of exercise in patients with fibromyalgia: An umbrella review

Alexandro Andrade, Fábio Hech Dominski and Sofia Mendes Sieczkowska;
Seminars in Arthritis and Rheumatism; February 2020

Setting the scene:

This Study aimed to analyze the evidence on the effects of physical exercise in patients with fibromyalgia (FM) and to assess the characteristics of published studies, especially the quality of the evidence, through an umbrella review.

What did they do?

This umbrella review followed the PRISMA guidelines. The methodological quality of systematic reviews was assessed using AMSTAR. Authors only selected systematic reviews (with or without meta-analyses) investigating the effects of any type of physical exercise in patients with FM syndrome. Thirty-seven systematic reviews (total=477) fulfilled the criteria. A variety of exercises were used as treatment for FM symptoms, with positive results. Most of the reviews investigated the effects of aerobic exercise and strength training. No serious adverse events were reported. The largest effects of exercise were seen in terms of improved pain intensity and quality of life. Altogether, exercise may be an effective treatment for FM symptoms. Thus, aerobic exercise and strength training are effective programs for the treatment of FM.

Takeaway message:

By summarizing the findings and effect sizes of the reviewed studies, Authors observed that the evidence for improvement of pain level and quality of life was the strongest.