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Title: Effects of pulmonary rehabilitation in patients with severe COPD in comparison to patients with severe interstitial lung disease

Mr. Rainer 9585 Gloeckl rainer.gloeckl@gmx.de ¹, Ms. Inga 9588 Heinzelmänn
iheinzelmänn@schoen-kliniken.de ¹, Dr. Bernd 9589 Sczepanski bsczepanski@schoen-kliniken.de MD ¹,
Dr. Sandra 9590 Winterkamp swinterkamp@schoen-kliniken.de MD ¹, Prof. Jürgen 9591 Behr
j.behr@asklepios.com MD ² and Dr. Klaus 9592 Kenn kkenn@schoen-kliniken.de MD ¹. ¹ Respiratory
Medicine, Schoen Klinik Berchtesgadener Land, Schoenau am Koenigssee, Germany, 83483 and ²
Department of Internal Medicine and Pneumology, Ludwigs-Maximilians-University, Munich, Germany .

Body: Background There is some evidence that patients with COPD or interstitial lung disease (ILD) may benefit differently from pulmonary rehabilitation (PR). Objective Aim of this retrospective analysis was to compare the effects of a comprehensive 4 week inpatient PR in patients with COPD vs ILD with regards to exercise capacity and quality of life (QoL). Methods 314 COPD-patients (62±9 ys, FEV₁: 28±8% pred., PaO₂: 57±8mmHg) and 96 patients with ILD (63±10 ys, IVC: 53±20%, PaO₂: 55±11mmHg) underwent the same multidisciplinary PR consisting of endurance/strength training, breathing retraining, education and psychological support. Patients performed a 6-MWT and completed the SF-36 questionnaire to determine general QoL on admission and discharge. Results Prior to PR patients with COPD and ILD showed a comparable limited exercise capacity (6MWD in COPD: 249±27m vs ILD: 247±30). After PR 6MWD improved significantly in patients with COPD (+64.4m, p<0.001) as well as in ILD-patients (+50.5m, p<0.001). Between-group difference was also significant (13.8m, p<0.05). Improvement in QoL was comparable in both groups regarding SF-36 mental health score (MHS) (COPD: from 36.7±16.0 to 45.8±14.7, p<0.001 and ILD: from 35.8±15.2 to 43.9±15.5, p<0.001) but showed no significant change in physical health score (PHS) (COPD: from 31.1± 9.7 to 31.2±9.7, n.s. and ILD: from 32.7±10.4 to 32.7±10.7, n.s.). Conclusion It seems that patients with COPD as well as ILD even in advanced stages may improve their 6MWD and their MHS during PR significantly. The benefit in exercise capacity seems to be higher in COPD. PHS remained unchanged in both groups without any significant difference in QoL.