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Title: Efficacy of pulmonary rehabilitation in patients with interstitial lung disease

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Body: Objectives: There are few reports describing the efficacy of pulmonary rehabilitation (PR) in patients with interstitial lung disease (ILD). We studied whether PR could improve functional status in a group of patients with ILD. Methods: PR was carried out for 12 weeks for clinically stable outpatients of our institute. Fifteen patients with ILD were enrolled in this prospective study. Six-minute walking test (6MWT), lung function test and evaluation of health-related quality of life including SGRQ were performed before and after the program. 6MWT and lung function test were also evaluated in 18 ILD patients without PR program with an interval of 12 weeks and compared with ILD patients who completed the program. Results: There was no significantly improved factor with the program in patients with ILD. %FVC (67.3% to 62.6%, $p < 0.05$) and body weight (64.9 kg to 63.7 kg, $p < 0.05$) were significantly decreased contrary to expectations. However, 6-minute walking distance (6MWD) was slightly improved after the program (369.3 m to 382.7 m) in contrast to the significant decrease in ILD patients without PR (409.4 m to 375.8 m, $p < 0.05$). Statistically significant difference was confirmed in the amount of change in 6MWD in these two groups (13.3 m vs. -33.5 m, $p < 0.05$). Despite that ILD patients with PR had lower lung function than those without PR at the initiation of the study, PR was effective to keep the exercise performance from deteriorating. Conclusions: Our results show that PR prevents the deterioration of functional status in patients with ILD. PR should be considered as a standard of care for ILD patients.