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Title: Efficacy of Nordic walking in rehabilitation of patients with COPD: Preliminary data

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Body: BACKGROUND. Nordic walking is a well-known activity which combines sport and wellness. It was conceived in Scandinavian countries as summer training for Nordic ski athletes and it is extremely simple to perform. However, there are very few studies which evaluated the use of Nordic walking in the field of physical rehabilitation. The aim of the study is to assess the efficacy of Nordic walking in patients with COPD. METHODS. We enrolled 11 patients with COPD (mean age 64,2±1,3) in a stable phase of their disease and randomized them into two groups. The study group was composed by 5 patients who performed a daily 30 minutes session of Nordic walking for 5 days a week for a total period of 3 weeks. The control group was composed by 6 patients who were treated with traditional rehabilitation (selective training of arms and legs) for the same period as study group. Both the groups performed educational intervention and exercises for respiratory coordination. The two groups of patients performed spirometry, blood gas analysis, 6 minutes walking test, MRC, BDI/TDI, EuroQoL and Saint George test before and after the rehabilitation period. RESULTS. Patients in the study group had a significant improvement in terms of post training 6 minutes walking test, MRC, EuroQoL and Saint George (p<0.05) whereas patients in the control group had only an improvement in MRC (p<0.05). CONCLUSIONS. This preliminary study shows the efficacy of nordic walking in reducing dyspnoea, improving physical performance and quality of life in a small group of patients with COPD. If confirmed in larger studies nordic walking could become part of the training schedules for COPD rehabilitation.