COCHRANE PRIMARY HEALTH CARE FIELD

PEARLS

Practical Evidence About Real Life Situations

Aquatic exercise beneficial in knee and hip osteoarthritis

Clinical question	Are aquatic exercise interventions effective in the treatment of knee and hip osteoarthritis (OA)?
Bottom line	Aquatic exercises appear to have some beneficial short-term (3 months) effects for patients with knee and/or hip OA. Compared to no exercise or land-based exercises aquatic exercises reduced pain by 1 more point on a scale of 0 to 20 and improved function by 3 more points on a scale of 0 to 68. Based on this, aquatic exercises may be considered as the first part of a longer exercise program for OA patients.
Caveat	Most trials were only followed up for 3 months. The progress of damage in OA as seen on X-rays was not measured.
Context	Aquatic exercise is also known as “pool therapy” or “hydrotherapy”. It involves exercise in water that is heated to about 32 to 36 degrees Celsius. Exercises may include aerobic activities, stretching and strengthening, and range of motion.
Cochrane Systematic Review	Bartels EM et al. **Aquatic exercise for the treatment of knee and hip osteoarthritis.** Cochrane Reviews 2007, Issue 4. Art No : CD005523. DOI :10.1002/14651858. CD005523.pub2. This review contains 6 trials involving 800 participants.
Pearls No. 38 November 2007 (Brian R McAvoy)	

PEARLS are succinct summaries of Cochrane Systematic Reviews for primary care practitioners. They are funded by the New Zealand Guidelines Group.

PEARLS provide guidance on whether a treatment is effective or ineffective. PEARLS are prepared as an educational resource and do not replace clinician judgement in the management of individual cases.

View PEARLS online at:

- **www.cochraneprimarycare.org**