Abstract

Background: the literature supports the benefits of exercise in people with depressive disorders, but there is controversy over these benefits in depressed elderly. Objective: to determine the effect of different types of exercise on depression in older adults using a systematic review of clinical trials. Data sources: the Cochrane Library; PubMed Medline (1966 dic 2010); Embase (1980 dic 2010); Lilacs (1986 dic 2010); Scielo (1998 dic 2010); Register of Controlled Trials; manual search in other sources.

Methods: clinical trials with people > 60 years with diagnosis of depression were included, without restriction by year of publication, language and sex, with exercise intervention structures, controlled with usual care (medication, psychotherapy, electric shock therapy), placebo or nonintervention. Three independent reviewers conducted the search, applied inclusion and exclusion criteria, assessed methodological quality and extracted data; discrepancies were resolved by consensus. The primary outcome was the score for depressive symptoms. Results: a total of 11 studies (n = 7195) were identified. In general, exercise produces an improvement in depression in older adults with more evidence in the shortterm (3 months) and strength training at high intensity.

Conclusions: exercise is beneficial for older persons with depression, but studies that support this are of low methodological quality and heterogeneous, which makes it necessary to develop clinical trials to clarify the magnitude of the effect and the levels at which it is beneficial.

Keywords
Depression, exercise, physical activity, elderly.