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The effect of gate ball exercise on peripheral neuropathy of the elderly

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Purpose: We designed and implemented a gate ball exercise program for elderly patients with peripheral neuropathy. This was to provide and increase physical activity to improve social participation and prevent secondary complications.

Methods: The program was held in a private gate ball field three times a week from April to November 2016. We hired a professional technical coach with help from the Association of Goheung gate balls and the patients participated in a total of nine local community competitions. In order to investigate the satisfaction of the patients, we made a questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 8 items: technical guidance, exercise facility, exercise equipment, frequency, quantity, change of life (activity), help to maintain health, and eliminate bias. The questionnaire was administered twice, in April and November. Statistical analysis was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics 21 and paired t-test.

Results: All 23 patients participated in the program and 20 completed the questionnaire. Satisfaction was improved in most of the questionnaire items and this was statistically significant.

Conclusion: The patients increased their social participation by experiencing competition through exercise and by interacting with others. For the elderly patients with inactive peripheral neuropathy, gate ball exercise was an easy and entertaining activity. The presence of a professional technical coach and the use of specific exercise programs and private gate ball fields' furtherly enhanced patient participation and satisfaction. We have found that gate ball exercise has brought a positive change in the physical and mental condition of the patients and is suitable as a sustainable exercise.

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