

The Mental and Physical Influence of Summer Vacation on Congestive Heart Failure Patients Participating in Regular Exercise Training.

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Background: Exercise training for advanced heart failure patients is an integral part of the treatment protocol at the Heart Failure Unit in Rabin Medical Centre.

During August, the rehabilitation unit is closed for vacation. During this month, patients are encouraged to continue the physical exercise.

Aim: To determine whether the vacation had an impact on the patients' physical and mental well-being.

Method: Eleven patients (9 men, 10 married and one divorced, age 55 to 69 years), exercising for at least 3 months in the unit, filled a survey regarding their activities, "HADS" survey regarding their emotional health and performed 6 minute walking test pre and post vacation. Ten patients are pensioners and one is self employed.

Results: During the vacation, only 4 patients continued their regular activity: walking and cycling. Pre-vacation, all patients felt physically healthy compared to 60% of them post vacation. 10% reported improvement and 30% claimed worsening.

Post-vacation, 6 minutes walk test decreased by 10%-20% and by 2%-9% in 4 patients each. Three patients experienced increase of 8%-51%.

Regarding the pre-vacation HADS, 8% were depressed, 16% had bad feelings most of the time, 42% had bad feeling sometimes, and 34% felt good all the time. Post vacation, none of the patients were depressed, 17% had bad feelings most of the time, 50% had bad feelings sometimes, and 33% felt good all of the time.

Conclusion: Patient's mental health improved because they did not have to visit the hospital. An individual program after training and proper guidance in which patients can independently work is important.