Don’t employ passive physical agents except when necessary to facilitate participation in an active treatment program.

There is limited evidence for use of passive physical agents to obtain clinically important outcomes for musculoskeletal conditions. A carefully designed active treatment plan has a greater impact on pain, mobility, function and quality of life. While there is some evidence of short-term pain relief for certain physical agents, the addition of passive physical agents should be supported by evidence and used to facilitate an active treatment program. There is emerging evidence that passive physical agents can harm patients. Communicating to patients that passive, instead of active, management strategies are advisable exacerbates fears and anxiety that many patients have about being physically active when in pain, which can prolong recovery, increase costs and increase the risk of exposure to invasive and costly interventions such as injections or surgery.

Don’t prescribe under-dosed strength training programs for older adults. Instead, match the frequency, intensity and duration of exercise to the individual’s abilities and goals.

Improved strength in older adults is associated with improved health, quality of life and functional capacity, and with a reduced risk of falls. Older adults are often prescribed low dose exercise and physical activity that are physiologically inadequate to increase gains in muscle strength. Failure to establish accurate baseline levels of strength limits the adequacy of the strength training dosage and progression, and thus limits the benefits of the training. A carefully developed and individualized strength training program may have significant health benefits for older adults.

Don’t recommend bed rest following diagnosis of acute deep vein thrombosis (DVT) after the initiation of anti-coagulation therapy, unless significant medical concerns are present.

Given the clinical benefits and lack of evidence indicating harmful effects of ambulation and activity both are recommended following achievement of anticoagulation goals unless there are overriding medical indications. Patients can be harmed by prolonged bed rest that is not medically necessary.

Don’t use continuous passive motion machines for the postoperative management of patients following uncomplicated total knee replacement.

Continuous passive motion (CPM) treatment does not lead to clinically important effects on short- or long-term knee extension, long-term knee flexion, long-term function, pain and quality of life in patients undergoing total knee arthroplasty (TKA). With rehabilitation protocols now supporting early mobilization, the use of CPM following uncomplicated total knee arthroplasty should be questioned unless medical and/or surgical complication exist that limit or contraindicate rehabilitation protocols that foster early mobilization. The cost, inconvenience and risk of prolonged bed rest with CPM should be weighed carefully against its limited benefit. As members of interprofessional teams involved in post-operative rehabilitation of patient following total knee replacement, physical therapists have a responsibility to advocate for effective alternatives to CPM for most patients.

Don’t use whirlpools for wound management.

Whirlpools are a non-selective form of mechanical debridement. Utilizing whirlpools to treat wounds predisposes the patient to risks of bacterial cross-contamination, damage to fragile tissue from high turbine forces and complications in extremity edema when arms and legs are treated in a dependent position in warm water. Other more selective forms of hydrotherapy should be utilized, such as directed wound irrigation or a pulsed lavage with suction.
Sources


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