

2.21 Effectiveness of COPD Support Ireland-delivered exercise classes in maintaining symptoms and functional status

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Background: The benefits of intensive exercise courses in COPD diminish over time. We examined the effectiveness of weekly exercise classes delivered by COPD Support Ireland (COPDSI) in maintaining symptoms and functional status.

Method: Participating COPDSI members completed Borg breathlessness score, CAT score, 1-minute sit-to-stand (STS) and 6-minute walk test (6mwt) assessments at 3-month intervals. The change in assessment results over time, and the proportion of participants who maintained or improved scores were established.

Results: Data from 273 participants from 23 COPDSI groups nationwide was examined. There was high symptom burden, mean CAT 18.5 (6.8) on first assessment. There was no significant change in mean symptom scores at 3- or 6-months. At 3-months, 69% had maintained or improved CAT and 44% at 6-months. 28% reported changes exceeding the MCID at both time points. Three-quarters had unchanged or improved Borg scores with 25% exceeding the MCID for improvement at both 3- and 6-months.

Functional status did improve; 6mwt distance increased significantly at 3-months (n=15), mean change 39.7(34.1)m, p=0.0005, with 60% exceeding the MCID threshold. Mean STS repetitions were unchanged over time. Results were maintained or improved in 66.6% and 75% at 3- and 6-months respectively.

Conclusion: COPDSI exercise classes are effective in maintaining symptoms and functional status.

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