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Promising Way to Mitigate Sarcopenia in CKD: Exercise

Jun Chul Kim

CHA Gumi Medical Center, Republic of Korea

Sarcopenia is now well-known as one of the most devastating complications frequently encountered in the chronic kidney disease (CKD) population, linked to heightened risks of falls, protein-energy wasting (PEW), poor health-related quality of life (QOL), cardiovascular diseases, hospitalization, mortality, and more. To overcome this tough challenge, three mainstays of management have been suggested so far: medication, nutritional support, and exercise. Since exercise training for CKD patients undergoing hemodialysis was first introduced in 1977, it has received less attention compared to the other two strategies, despite its long history and numerous related researches showing favorable effects in various aspects, including sarcopenia. Reasons for the limited adoption of exercise prescription in the management of sarcopenia are as follows: poor compliance, scarcity of studies of long-term (≥ 6 months), large-scale, randomized controlled trial (RCT) design, and a lack of confidence and available time for medical staff to be involved in exercise therapies. We must acknowledge these factors as reasons why exercise training has not been widely adopted as a therapeutic option in CKD patients. I aim to present more convincing data to garner greater interest in exercise as a therapeutic option. Encouragingly, there are ongoing movement and trials of diverse and evolving patterns of exercise models, relatively long-term and RCT-designed studies, and combinations with other options such as medication and nutritional supplements. Needless to say, we need a proper medical cost reimbursement system for physicians to initiate and maintain exercise programs in their routine care to mitigate sarcopenia and related clinical adverse consequences in CKD patients. This is another important and significant issue, albeit one I cannot delve into due to limited available time. What I am trying to convey is that I hope we do not forget or discard exercise training from our options of management for CKD patients suffering from sarcopenia.



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*Promoting Sustainable Kidney Health:
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