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Outcomes of Formalized Physical Therapy vs. Self-Directed Home Exercise


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Title: Outcomes of Formalized Physical Therapy vs. Self-Directed Home Exercise

Introduction: After a formal microdiscectomy or 1-2 level anterior cervical discectomy and fusion (ACDF) there exists a lack of consensus on effectiveness of postoperative formal physical therapy (PT) rehabilitation efficacy. We seek to determine whether home PT is equivalent to standard PT using patient reported outcomes measures (PROMs) after the aforementioned operations.

Methods: This study is a prospective single center cohort study. The inclusion criteria is patients undergoing a microdiscectomy or ACDF operation excluding patients under 18, infection, trauma, tumor, or revision. Outcomes are measured using PROMs specific for each operation.

Results: Preliminary data suggests that post-operative microdiscectomy patients did not show significant difference at one year after home PT vs standard PT ($p=0.203$). Preliminary data also suggests no significant difference between post-operative ACDF home PT vs standard PT at one year when looking at neck pain ($p=0.210$) and arm pain ($p=0.235$). Mental health after post operation showed no significant difference ($p=0.429$) as did overall physical health ($p=0.673$).

Conclusion: Patients in the home PT group had similar outcomes to the standard (formal) PT group at 1 year following operation for pain, physical health, and mental health. This suggests a possible low cost, pragmatic avenue for patients after operation to optimize post-operative outcomes.