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# Community-Deliverable Exercise and Anxiety in Adults with Arthritis and other Rheumatic Diseases: A Systematic Review with Meta-Analysis of Randomized Controlled Trials

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# **ABSTRACT**

Background/Purpose: Given conflicting findings, the purpose of this study was to use the meta-analytic approach to examine the effects of exercise (aerobic, strength training or both) on anxiety in adults with arthritis and other rheumatic diseases (AORD). **Methods:** Randomized controlled exercise intervention trials > 4 weeks in adults > 18 years of age with osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis or fibromyalgia were included. Studies were located by searching 8 electronic databases, cross-referencing and expert review. Dual selection and data abstraction of studies were performed. Hedge's standardized effect size (ES) was calculated for each result and pooled using the recently developed inverse-heterogeneity (IVhet) model. Two-tailed z-alpha values ≤ 0.05 and non-overlapping 95% confidence intervals (CI) were considered statistically significant. Heterogeneity was estimated using Q and  $l^2$  with alpha values < 0.10 for Q considered statistically significant. Small-study effects were examined using funnel plots and Egger's regression test. In addition, the number-needed-to-treat (NNT), percentile improvement and meta-regression were conducted. Results: Of the 639 citations screened, 14 studies representing 926 initially enrolled participants (539 exercise, 387 control) met the criteria for inclusion. Length of training averaged 15.8 + 6.7 weeks, frequency 3.3 + 1.3 times per week and duration 28.8 + 14.3 minutes per session. Overall, statistically significant exercise minus control reductions in anxiety were found (ES = -0.40, 95% CI, -0.65, -0.15,  $tau^2 = 0.14$ ; Q = 40.3, p = 0.0004;  $I^2 = 0.14$ 62.8%). The NNT was 6 with a percentile improvement of 15.5% and an estimated 5.3 million inactive US adults with AORD improving their anxiety if they started exercising regularly. Statistically significant small-study effects were observed (p < 0.0001).

- Conclusions: Exercise is associated with reductions in anxiety among adults with
- selected types of AORD. However, a need exists for additional, well-designed,
- randomized controlled trials on this topic. Trial registration number: PROSPERO
- (CRD42016048728)



### STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

- To the best of the investigative team's knowledge, this is the first systematic review with meta-analysis to examine the effects of exercise on anxiety as a primary outcome in adults with AORD.
- The use of the recently developed IVhet model appears to provide more robust estimates than those derived from other models.
- Common to all aggregate data meta-analyses, the possibility of ecological fallacy
   exists and the meta-regression analyses conducted do not allow for causal inferences.
- Given that no adjustments for multiple testing were made because of concerns about missing possibly important findings that could be tested in original trials, the possibility of chance findings exist.

### INTRODUCTION

Rationale

Arthritis and other rheumatic diseases (AORD) are major public health problems in the United States (US). Based on combined 2013-2015 data from the National Health Interview Survey, the annual prevalence of doctor-diagnosed arthritis in the civilian, non-institutionalized US population aged 18 years or older was 22.7% (54.4 million), with prevalence higher among women (23.5%) than men (18.1%). By 2040, it is estimated that 78.4 million (25.9%) US adults 18 years of age and older will have doctor-diagnosed arthritis.<sup>2</sup> Compared to combined 2013-2015 data,<sup>1</sup> this represents an increase of approximately 24 million adults. Not surprisingly, the financial costs associated with AORD in the United States are high. In 2003, the total costs attributable to AORD were estimated to be approximately \$128 billion, \$80.8 billion in direct costs (medical expenditures) and \$47 billion in indirect costs (lost earnings).<sup>3</sup> This represents an increase of 24% between 1997 and 2003 and was primarily the result of an increase in the number of people with AORD.<sup>3</sup> Elevated and sustained levels of anxiety can result in a number of deleterious consequences. These include, but are not limited to, (1) an increased risk for coronary heart disease as a result of heightened arousal leading to an increased risk for hypertension and a pro-inflammatory state, 4-6 (2) an increased risk for cardiac death, 5 and (3) poorer health-related quality-of-life. While it is well-recognized that depression is a common comorbidity among adults with AORD, recent research suggests that the prevalence of anxiety among US adults with arthritis is approximately twice as high as depression.8 Using data from the Arthritis Conditions Health Effects Survey, the

prevalence of anxiety and depression among US adults with doctor-diagnosed arthritis was estimated to be almost twice as high for anxiety (30.5%) versus depression (17.5%), with US population estimates of 11.5 million for anxiety and 6.6 million for depression.<sup>8</sup> Given the prevalence of anxiety, it was recommended that health care providers screen people with arthritis for anxiety.<sup>8</sup>

Exercise is an intervention that is generally safe and appropriate for most persons with various types of AORD. 9 10 Recent meta-analytic work has shown that communitydeliverable exercise interventions reduce depressive symptoms in adults, with an estimated 3.1 million inactive US adults with AORD improving their depressive symptoms if they began and maintained a regular exercise program. 11 However, the effects of community-deliverable exercise on anxiety as a primary outcome are not known given a plethora of conflicting randomized controlled trials on this topic as well as a lack of studies that assess both depression and anxiety within the same study (only 44.8% based on a previous meta-analysis). 11 Most importantly, a recent systematic review of previous meta-analyses, not to be confused with an original systematic review with meta-analyses, found that no meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials has examined the effects of community-deliverable exercise on anxiety as a primary outcome in adults with AORD. 12 Clearly, it is critically important to develop a better understanding of the overall magnitude of effect, as well as factors associated with, exercise for improving anxiety in adults with AORD.

# Objective

The primary objective of this study was to conduct a systematic review with an aggregate data meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials to determine the effects of

community-deliverable exercise interventions on anxiety in adults with AORD.

METHODS

# Overview

This study followed the guidelines from the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) statement for meta-analyses of health care interventions.<sup>13</sup> The protocol for this study is registered in PROSPERO (trial registration number CRD42016048728) and has been previously published in BMJ Open.<sup>14</sup>

# Eligibility criteria

Studies that met the following criteria were included: (1) randomized controlled trials with the unit of assignment at the participant level, (2) community-deliverable exercise-only intervention group (aerobic, strength training, or both), (3) interventions > 4 weeks, (4) comparative control group (non-intervention, wait-list control, usual care, attention control), (5) adults > 18 years of age with doctor-diagnosed osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis or fibromyalgia, (6) studies (published and unpublished in the form of Master's theses and dissertations) in any language, assuming an English-language abstract was available, from January 1, 1981 forward, and (7) data for anxiety, as defined by the authors of the original studies. Studies were limited to those with osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis or fibromyalgia based on previous meta-analytic research showing a lack of exercise intervention studies for other types of AORD.<sup>11</sup> Studies were limited to randomized trials because it is the only way to control for confounders that are not known or measured as well as the observation that nonrandomized controlled trials tend to overestimate the effects of healthcare interventions. 15 16 Aerobic and progressive resistance (strength training)

exercise were defined according to section C2 of the 2008 Physical Activity

Guidelines Advisory Committee Report. The Specifically, aerobic exercise is defined as any 'exercise that primarily uses the aerobic energy-producing systems, can improve the capacity and efficiency of these systems, and is effective for improving cardiorespiratory endurance, while strength training is defined as 'exercise training primarily designed to increase skeletal muscle strength, power, endurance, and mass'. The strength is a section of the s

For this proposed project, community-deliverable exercise interventions were considered to be those that could be performed, or have the potential to be adapted and performed, by persons in a community setting (recreation or senior centers, in the home or neighborhood, etc.) and meet the implementation guidelines for physical activity interventions recently recommended by the Arthritis Program at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: (1) no academic degree required for a leader/implementer but leader training available, if needed, (2) no special facilities beyond a community room (except a warm pool for aquatic exercise), (3) inexpensive equipment, (4) cost to participants less than \$50.00, (5) implementation guide available, (6) supporting structures judged to be adequate to support widespread implementation. 18 An exercise duration of at least 4 weeks was chosen based on previous research in which statistically significant improvements in anxiety occurred as a result of as little as 4 weeks of exercise training. 19 There was no maximum limit on the length of any interventions for the studies included in our proposed project. We limited our studies to adults ages 18 and older because the inclusion of children and adolescents pose additional confounding problems congruent with the many

developmental changes that occur during this period. In addition, the prevalence of AORD is more common in adults than children and adolescents. We restricted our studies to published articles, dissertations and master's theses and examined for potential small-study effects such as publication bias when limited to published articles in peer-reviewed journals. The year 1981 was chosen as the starting point for eligibility based on a preliminary PubMed search in which it was found that this was the first year that a randomized controlled trial on exercise and arthritis was published. Studies from both English and non-English-language sources were included with the latter translated into English by the second author using the freely available web-based Babelfish and Bing translators. Finally, while acknowledging that the mechanisms for changes in anxiety may differ for different types of AORD, for example fibromyalgia versus osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis, the purpose of the current systematic review with meta-analysis was to determine whether exercise reduces anxiety in adults with AORD, not why it reduces anxiety.

### Information sources

Eight electronic databases were searched for potentially eligible studies in any language published from January 1, 1981 forward. The last searches were conducted on January 6, 2017. Databases searched included (1) PubMed, (2) SPORTDiscus, (3) Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Clinical Trials (CENTRAL), (4) Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL), (5) PsycINFO, (6) Web of Science, (7) Scopus and (8) ProQuest (Master's theses and dissertations). In addition, cross-referencing from retrieved studies was conducted. Furthermore, the third author, an expert on physical activity and AORD, reviewed the reference list for completeness.

# Search strategy

Search strategies were developed using text words as well as medical subject headings (MeSH) associated with the effects of exercise on anxiety in adults with AORD. The second author conducted all electronic database searches. A copy of the search strategy for one of the databases searched (PubMed) is shown in Supplementary file 1.

## Study records

182 Study selection

All studies to potentially be screened were imported into EndNote (EndNote, Version X8. New York, NY: Thomson Reuters, 2016). Duplicates were then removed both electronically and manually by the second author. A copy of the database was then provided to the first author for duplicate screening. The first two authors selected all studies, independent of each other. The full report for each article was obtained for all titles and abstracts that appeared to meet the inclusion criteria or where there was any uncertainty. Multiple reports of the same study were handled by including the most recently published article as well as drawing from previous reports, assuming similar methods and sample sizes. Neither of the screeners were blinded to the journal titles or to the study authors or institutions. Reasons for exclusion were coded as one or more of the following: (1) inappropriate population, (2) inappropriate intervention, (3) inappropriate comparison(s), (4) inappropriate outcome(s), (5) inappropriate study design, (6) other. Upon completion, the first two authors met and reviewed their selections. Discrepancies were resolved by consensus. If consensus could not be reached, the third author provided a recommendation. Using Cohen's kappa statistic  $(\kappa)$ , <sup>21</sup> the overall agreement rate prior to correcting disagreements was 0.90. After

identifying the final number of studies to be included, the overall precision of the searches was calculated by dividing the number of studies included by the total number of studies screened after removing duplicates.<sup>22</sup> The number needed-to-read (NNR) was then calculated as the inverse of the precision.<sup>22</sup>

Data abstraction

Prior to the abstraction of data, a codebook that could hold more than 200 items per study was developed using Microsoft Excel (Microsoft Excel, Version 2010, Redmond, WA). The codebook was developed by the first two authors with input from the third author. The major categories of variables coded included (1) study characteristics (author, journal, year, etc.), (2) participant characteristics (age, height, body weight, etc.), (3) intervention characteristics (type, length, frequency, intensity, duration, compliance, etc.), and (4) outcome characteristics for anxiety (sample sizes, baseline and post-exercise means and standard deviations, etc.). The first two authors abstracted data from all studies, independent of each other, using separate codebooks in Microsoft Excel. Upon completion of coding, the codebooks were merged into one primary codebook for review. Both authors then met and reviewed every item for agreement. Discrepancies were resolved by consensus. If consensus could not be reached, the third author provided a recommendation. Using Cohen's kappa statistic (κ).<sup>21</sup> the overall agreement rate prior to correcting disagreements was 0.95.

### **Outcomes and prioritization**

The primary outcome in this study was changes in anxiety. Secondary outcomes included changes in physical function, pain, depression, quality of life, body mass index

(BMI in kg·m<sup>-2</sup>), maximum oxygen consumption (VO2<sub>max</sub> in ml·kg<sup>-1</sup>·min<sup>-1</sup>), and muscular strength.

### Risk of bias assessment in individual studies

Risk of bias was assessed at the study level using the Cochrane Risk of Bias instrument, 23 with a focus on the primary outcome of interest, changes in anxiety. Bias was evaluated across six domains: (1) random sequence generation, (2) allocation concealment, (3) blinding of participants and personnel, (4) blinding of outcome assessment, (5) incomplete outcome data, (6) selective reporting and (7) whether participants were exercising regularly, as defined by the original study authors, prior to taking part in the study. Each item was classified as having either a high, low, or unclear risk of bias. Because it's virtually impossible to blind participants to group assignment in exercise intervention protocols, all studies were classified as high risk with respect to the category "blinding of participants and personnel". Based on previous research, no study was excluded based on the results of the risk of bias assessment.<sup>24</sup> The first two authors conducted all assessments, independent of each other. Both authors then met and reviewed all selections for agreement. Discrepancies were resolved by consensus, and if necessary, consultation with the third author. Using Cohen's kappa statistic (κ),<sup>21</sup> the overall agreement rate for risk of bias assessment prior to correcting disagreements was 0.71.

# **Data Synthesis**

# **Calculation of effect sizes**

The primary outcome for this proposed project was changes in anxiety, calculated as
Hedge's standardized mean difference effect size (ES), adjusted for small-sample

bias.<sup>25</sup> This was calculated by subtracting the change outcome difference in the exercise group minus the change outcome difference in the control group, and then dividing by the pooled standard deviation of the change outcome for the exercise and control groups. If change score standard deviations were not available, they were calculated from reported change outcomes, treatment effect 95% confidence intervals (CI), or pre and post standard deviation values according to procedures developed by Follmann et al.<sup>26</sup> Secondary outcomes (physical function, pain, quality of life, depression, muscular strength) were calculated using the same procedures as for the primary outcome while BMI and VO2<sub>max</sub> were calculated using the original metric. For studies in which outcomes were assessed at multiple time points, differences between baseline values and the final time point closest to cessation of the exercise intervention were used.

# Pooled estimates for changes in outcomes

Effect size changes in anxiety and all secondary outcomes were pooled using the recently developed inverse heterogeneity (IVhet) model.<sup>27</sup> The IVhet model is a quasi-likelihood model that is computed by (1) calculating weights that sum to 1 from each study, (2) pooling effects from all the studies, and (3) calculating the variance of the pooled ES. The IVhet model has been shown to be superior to the original random-effects, method-of-moments model of Dersimonian and Laird,<sup>28</sup> the most common random-effects model used to pool aggregate data meta-analytic results.<sup>29</sup> Specifically, simulation studies have shown that the IVhet model retains correct coverage probabilities as well as a lower observed variance than the random-effects

model, regardless of heterogeneity.<sup>27</sup> Two-tailed z-alpha values < 0.05 and nonoverlapping 95% confidence intervals were considered statistically significant. Heterogeneity and inconsistency for each pooled outcome were estimated using the  $Q^{30}$  and  $I^2$  statistic,  $Q^{31}$  respectively. An alpha level of  $\leq 0.10$  for Q was considered to represent statistically significant heterogeneity while inconsistency was categorized as very low (<25%), low (25% to <50%), moderate (50% to <75%) or large (> 75%).31 To improve practical relevance with respect to potential improvements in anxiety and all secondary outcomes, percentile gain in the exercise groups was calculated using Cohen's U<sub>3</sub> index<sup>32</sup> In addition, the number-needed-to treat (NNT) was estimated using the approach suggested by the Cochrane Collaboration<sup>23</sup> and a control group risk of 30% based on previous research on anxiolytics.<sup>33</sup> This was accomplished by converting the standardized mean differences into a log odds ratio, odds ratio, assumed control risk (30%) and then NNT. Extending the NNT, estimates of the number of US adults with AORD who could improve their anxiety levels but were not currently meeting physical activity recommendations were calculated. These were based on the reciprocal of the NNT multiplied by the number of adults in the United States with doctordiagnosed arthritis who were not currently meeting exercise guidelines, currently approximately 31.6 million. 134 Influence analysis was conducted with each study deleted from the model once while *cumulative meta-analysis*, ranked by year, was used to examine the accumulation of results over time. The primary pooling of results was based on group level findings. However, findings were also examined by collapsing results so that only one ES represented each study. In addition, for those outcomes that were assessed using multiple instruments, results

from these instruments were pooled into one ES. The rationale for this was based on the lack of consensus regarding the most valid and reliable instrument for the outcome and population of interest as well as the need to maintain as much independence as possible. For those studies that reported both per protocol and intention-to-treat analyses, results were also pooled into one ES.

Exploratory meta-regression based on the IVhet model was used to examine the relationship between changes in our primary outcome (anxiety) and selected covariates.<sup>27</sup> This was accomplished by (1) conducting simple meta-regression for statistically significant associations between selected covariates and changes in anxiety, (2) examining for multicollinearity between covariates (r > 0.80), and (3) building a multiple meta-regression model. These models used a multiplicative versus additive component for residual heterogeneity. To achieve matching error variances, robust Huber-Ecker-White-sandwich error variances were used to account for the underestimated dispersion. Such errors were expected to calculate the correct standard errors for heterogeneous data that are traditionally heteroskedastic. Because of the small sample size, a post hoc decision was made to include the three potential predictors with the largest R<sup>2</sup> values as a result of simple regression analyses. However, since the investigative team felt that total minutes of training per week was more appropriate than total minutes of training over the entire duration of the study, the former was included in the regression. Multiple imputation was used to impute missing values for minutes of training per week so that the maximum sample size could be achieved.

Based on the recommendations of Rothman,<sup>35</sup> no adjustments for multiple testing were made because of concerns about missing possibly important findings that could be pursued in future randomized controlled trials. While this could be viewed as a 'fishing expedition', such analyses are important for providing investigators with potential direction for future randomized controlled trials, one of the very reasons for conducting a systematic review with meta-analysis.<sup>36</sup> This approach is especially appropriate for meta-analysis since covariates are not randomly assigned in meta-analysis and thus, such analyses are considered to be observational in nature.<sup>37</sup> As a result, causal inferences cannot be derived from meta-regression. However, any observed associations can provide direction for future research.

# **Meta-biases**

*Small-study-effects* (publication bias, etc.) for primary and secondary outcomes were assessed following current guidelines. This included qualitative analysis using funnel plots as well as quantitative analysis using Egger's regression-intercept test for continuous data. An alpha level  $\leq$  0.05 and 95% CI that did not include zero (0) was considered to represent statistically significant small-study effects.

### Confidence in cumulative evidence

Strength of findings for our primary outcome (anxiety) was evaluated using the Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development and Evaluation (GRADE) for meta-analysis.<sup>39</sup> The quality of evidence was assessed across the domains of risk of bias, consistency, directness, precision and publication bias. Quality was judged as high (further research is very unlikely to change our confidence in the estimate of effect), moderate (further research is likely to have an important impact on our confidence in the

estimate of effect and may change the estimate), low (further research is very likely to have an important impact on our confidence in the estimate of effect and is likely to change the estimate), or very low (very uncertain about the estimate of effect).

# Software used for data synthesis

- All data was analyzed using Stata (V.14.1; Stata/SE for Windows (Version 14.1).
- College Station, Texas: Stata Corporation LP, 2015), Microsoft Excel 2010 (Microsoft
- Excel (Version 2010)), and three add-ins for Excel, Meta XL (V.5.3; Meta XL (Version
- 5.3). 2016), SSC-Stat (V.2.18; SSC-Stat (Version 2.18). University of Reading, UK:
- Statistical Services Center, 2007), and EZ-Analyze (V.3.0; EZ Analyze (Version 3.0).
- Boston, MA: Tim Poynton, 2007).

# **RESULTS**

# **Study Characteristics**

A flow diagram that depicts the search process for study selection is shown in Figure 1. After initially identifying 639 citations and removing 240 duplicates both electronically and manually, 399 citations were screened. Of these, 14 studies representing 30 groups (16 exercise, 14 control) and 926 initially enrolled participants (539 exercise, 387 control) met the criteria for inclusion. Two studies included more than one intervention group. One included a pool and walking group while the other included a long and short bout exercise group. The major reasons for exclusion were (1) inappropriate intervention (47.8%), (2) inappropriate study design (32.2%), (3) inappropriate population (11.9%), (4) inappropriate comparison group (4.7%), and (5) inappropriate outcome (3.4%). The precision of the search, excluding duplicates, was

3.5% while the NNR was 29. A list of excluded studies, including the reasons for exclusion, can be found in Supplementary File 2.

With respect to source, 1 study (7.1%) was published as a dissertation<sup>41</sup> while the source of the source of

With respect to source, 1 study (7.1%) was published as a dissertation<sup>41</sup> while the remaining 13 (92.9%) were published in peer-reviewed journals. 40 42-53 For the 12 studies (85.7%) in which data were available, the 5-year impact factor of the journals in which studies were published ranged from 1.7 to 7.9 ( $\overline{\times}$  + SD, 4.1 + 2.4, median = 2.9). Five studies (35.7%) were published in the United States, 41 42 46-48 2 each in either Canada, 45 51 Portugal 52 53 or Spain, 49 50 and 1 each in either Australia, 43 Brazil, 40 or Ireland. 44 Thirteen of the 14 studies (92.9%) were published in English-language journals<sup>40-52</sup> while 1 (7.1%) was published in Spanish.<sup>53</sup> With respect to types of control groups, 4 studies used either a wait-list control 40 41 43 44 or what appeared to be some type of attention control group, 42 46 48 51 while three each used either a non-intervention 45 <sup>47 52</sup> or usual care group. <sup>49 50 53</sup> Three studies (21.4%) reported using matching procedures according to either sex, 45 age, sex and BMI, 46 or type of arthritis (rheumatoid or osteoarthritis). 48 None of the studies reported using any type of crossover design. 40-53 For data analysis, 7 studies (50.0%) reported using the perprotocol approach, 41 46-48 50 52 53 4 (28.6%) used intention-to-treat, 40 42-44 while the remaining 3 (21.4%) used both. 45 49 51 Eight studies (57.1%) provided sample size estimates. 40 42-44 46 50 51 53 With respect to funding, 12 studies (85.7%), reported receiving funding from government, university, or private sources for their work. 40 42-52

# **Participant Characteristics**

A description of the physical characteristics of participants for those studies that reported data is shown in Tables 1 and 2. On average, participants were overweight

and had low cardiorespiratory fitness. The majority of participants were women. although 7 studies (50.0%) also included a small number of men. 42-48 Nine studies (64.3%) were limited to participants with fibromyalgia, 40 41 45 46 49-53 3 (21.4%) with osteoarthritis, 42-44 1 with rheumatoid arthritis 47 and 1 with either rheumatoid arthritis or osteoarthritis.<sup>48</sup> For those studies in which data were available, the number of years in which rheumatic symptoms were present ranged from 3 to 24 ( $\overline{\times}$  + SD, 13.1 + 7.0, median = 12.0),  $^{44-46}$  49 51-53 while years since diagnosis ranged from 3 to 7 ( $\overline{\times}$  + SD, 4.1 + 2.0, median = 3). <sup>45 51-53</sup> Nine of the 14 studies (64.3%) reported that one or more participants were taking some type of medication for their condition. 41 43-45 47-49 52 53 These included, but were not necessarily limited to, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS), analgesics, narcotics and non-narcotics for pain, muscle relaxants, antidepressants, and anxiolytics. One study reported cigarette smoking in some of the participants.<sup>51</sup> Participant withdrawals or removal in the exercise groups ranged from 0% to 50% ( $\times \pm$  SD, 17.4  $\pm$  13.4, median = 17.0) while withdrawals or removal in the control groups ranged from 0% to 41% ( $\overline{x}$  + SD, 11.5 + 12.7, median = 6.3). Reasons for withdrawals or removal included such things as family issues, pain from exercising, injuries, personal issues, time, unhappiness with group assignment, transportation issues, moving, employment commitments, boredom with exercise routine, not enough room or privacy to perform exercise, failure to complete lab assessments, not attending a specific percentage of the exercise sessions, or changing medications that could affect mood.

### **Exercise Intervention Characteristics**

Exercise intervention characteristics for each group from each study are shown in Tables 1 and 3. Intensity of training, categorized according to American College of Sports Medicine<sup>54</sup> and limited to aerobic exercise only, included very light, light. moderate and vigorous exercise for the 9 (64.3%) studies that reported such information. 41 45 46 48-53 For mode of training, 6 studies (42.9%) focused on aerobic types of exercise, 40 41 45 48 50 51 1 (7.1%) on weight training, 47 and 7 (50.0%) on both, 42-44 46 49 52 <sup>53</sup> Specific types of aerobic activities included such things as aquatic exercise, walking, jogging, exercising to music and cycling. For the few studies that provided detailed information on resistance training, the number of sets ranged from 1 to 3.4749 the number of repetitions from 8 to 15,4749 and the number of exercises from 2 to 10 or more. 46 47 49 One study reported a rest period for 30 seconds between sets. 47 For those studies that reported data, the equipment used for resistance training included free weights and elastic bands. 42 46 47 52 53 Seven studies (50.0%) reported supervised exercise. 45 46 48-50 52 53 5 (35.7%) reported both supervised and unsupervised exercise, 40-<sup>44</sup> while the remaining 2 (14.3%) reported unsupervised exercise. <sup>47 51</sup> Three of the 14 studies (21.4%) reported some type of adverse event. 41 42 51 Reasons included 1 participant dropping out due to pain after the first exercise session. 41 2 participants because of a history of a herniated disk and low back and leg pain. 42 and 1 participant because of a metatarsal fracture.<sup>51</sup> Another study reported that 1 participant withdrew because of the exacerbation of back pain<sup>43</sup> while a final study reported the exclusion of 2 participants because of severe coronary artery disease. 47 None of the studies provided data on the costs associated with conducting the intervention. 40-53

# **Risk of Bias Assessment**

Results for risk of bias assessment using the Cochrane Risk of Bias Assessment Instrument are shown in Figure 2 and Supplementary file 3. As can be seen, greater than 50% of the studies were at an unclear or high risk of bias with respect to (1) incomplete outcome reporting (78.6%), (2) allocation concealment (78.6%), and (3) blinding of outcome assessors (57.1%). Given the inability to truly blind participants in exercise intervention trials, all studies (100%) were considered to be at a high risk of bias for the category 'blinding of participants and personnel'.

# **Data Synthesis**

Overall results for primary outcome (anxiety). Overall results for changes in anxiety for the 14 included studies 40-53 are shown in Table 4 and Figure 3. As can be seen, statistically significant (p = 0.002) reductions in anxiety were observed. In addition, statistically significant heterogeneity was observed while overall inconsistency was categorized as moderate, (range = low to large). The NNT was 6 with a percentile improvement of 15.5% and an estimated 5.3 million inactive US adults with AORD improving their anxiety if they started exercising regularly. Statistically significant smallstudy effects were observed (p < 0.0001) (Figure 4). With each result deleted from the model once, results remained statistically significant across all deletions, ranging from -0.44 (95% CI, -0.71 to -0.18) to -0.35 (-0.57 to -0.12). Cumulative meta-analysis, ranked by year, demonstrated that results have been statistically significant since the first study was conducted in 1989, 48 but with a trend towards smaller improvements in anxiety with each accumulating year (Figure 5). Reductions in anxiety were similar to group-level results when collapsed so that only one ES represented each study (ES, -0.40, 95% CI, -0.67 to -0.13, p = 0.004; Q = 39.6, p = 0.0002;  $I^2$  = 67.2%, 95% CI, 42.6% to 81.3%,

 $tau^2 = 0.15$ ). With six outliers deleted from the model, overall reductions in anxiety were similar but heterogeneity was no longer statistically significant and overall inconsistency was reduced to a level categorized as small (ES, -0.40, 95% CI, -0.62 to -0.18, p = 0.0004; Q = 11.8, p = 0.22;  $I^2$  = 24.0%, 95% CI, 0% to 63.1%, tau2 = 0.03). Meta-regression results for anxiety. Simple meta-regression results are shown in Supplementary File 4. For study characteristics, greater reductions in anxiety were associated with (1) earlier publication year, (2) studies at an unclear versus low risk of bias, (3) studies in which sample size estimates were not provided, (4) trials in which a larger percentage of participants initially agreed to participate in, and (5) studies that were not funded versus funded. For participant characteristics, greater improvements were associated with a larger percent dropout in the exercise groups as well as younger age. For exercise intervention characteristics, greater reductions were associated with (1) aerobic/strength training versus aerobic and strength training combined, (2) fewer minutes of exercise per session, (3) minutes of exercise per week, and (4) total minutes of exercise for the entire intervention period. Greater reductions were also associated with (1) supervised and unsupervised exercise versus both, (2) facility and home-based exercise versus both and (3) group and self-exercise versus both. Results for the final multiple regression model are shown in Table 5. The overall model was statistically significant (F = 17.2, p = 0.0005). Earlier year of publication and studies at an unclear versus low risk of bias for incomplete outcome data were statistically significant predictors for greater reductions in anxiety. However, minutes of exercise per week was no longer statistically significant.

**GRADE findings for changes in anxiety.** An evidence profile for changes in anxiety is shown in Supplementary file 5. As can be seen, the outcome (anxiety) was considered critical and the overall strength of the finding was considered high, with future additional studies unlikely to have an effect on the overall direction of findings. **Results for secondary outcomes.** Overall results for changes in secondary outcomes are shown in Table 4. Physical function was assessed in 10 studies 40 42-45 47 48 51-53 using the 10 meter walk test, 50 foot walk, 6 minute walk, Arthritis Impact and Measurement Scale (AIMS), Fibromyalgia Impact Questionnaire (FIQ), Short Physical Performance Battery, sit-to-stand test, stairclimbing test, up and go test, and the Western Ontario and McMaster Osteoarthritis Index (WOMAC). As can be seen, statistically significant (p < 0.001) improvements in physical function were observed. Statistically significant heterogeneity was observed while inconsistency was categorized as moderate. (range = low to large). The NNT was 4 with a percentile improvement of 24.5% and an estimated 9 million inactive US adults with AORD improving their physical function if they started exercising regularly. No statistically significant small-study effects were observed (p = 0.17). With each result deleted from the model once, results remained statistically significant across all deletions, ranging from 0.54 (95% CI, 0.30 to 0.78) to 0.73 (95% CI, 0.39 to 1.06). Cumulative meta-analysis, ranked by year, demonstrated that results have been statistically significant since the first study was conducted in 1989, 48 but with a trend towards smaller improvements in physical function with each accumulating year (from 0.86 in 1989 to 0.66 in 2016). Improvements in physical function were similar to group-level results when collapsed so that only one ES represented each study (ES, 0.66, 95% CI, 0.31 to 1.01, p = 0.0002; Q = 35.6, p < 0.001;  $I^2$  = 74.7%, 95% CI, 52.8%

to 86.5%,  $tau^2 = 0.21$ ). With four outliers deleted from the model, overall improvements in physical function were statistically significant but slightly smaller, heterogeneity was no longer statistically significant, and overall inconsistency was reduced to a level categorized as very low (ES, 0.57, 95% CI, 0.36 to 0.78, p <0.001; Q = 7.2, p =0.41;  $I^2$  = 2.7%. 95% CI. 0% to 68.5%.  $tau^2 = 0.003$ ). For pain, assessment was conducted in 13 studies 40-44 46-53 using the AIMS, FIQ, numerical rating scale, tender point count, visual analog scale and the WOMAC. As can be seen in Table 4, statistically significant (p = 0.017) decreases in pain were found. Statistically significant heterogeneity was observed while inconsistency was categorized as large, including both Cls. The NNT was 6 with a percentile improvement of 23.1% and an estimated 5.6 million inactive US adults with AORD decreasing their pain if they started exercising regularly. No statistically significant small-study effects were observed (p = 0.34). With each result deleted from the model once, results remained statistically significant across all deletions, ranging from -0.70 (95% CI, -1.21 to -0.19) to -0.47 (95% CI, -0.80 to -0.15). Cumulative meta-analysis, ranked by year, demonstrated that results have been statistically significant, and remained statistically significant, since only 2013. Decreases in pain were similar to group-level results when collapsed so that only one ES represented each study (ES, -0.62, 95% CI, -1.16 to -0.07, p = 0.03; = 123.7. p <0.001:  $I^2$  = 90.3%, 95% CI, 85.3% to 93.6%, tau<sup>2</sup> = 0.75). With ten outliers deleted from the model, decreases in pain remained statistically significant but smaller, heterogeneity was no longer statistically significant, and overall inconsistency was reduced to a level categorized as very low (ES, -0.44, 95% CI, -0.70 to -0.18, p = 0.001;

Q = 1.5, p = 0.68;  $I^2$  = 0%, 95% CI, 0% to 69.5%, tau<sup>2</sup> = 0).

Depression was assessed in 13 studies 40-48 50-53 using the AIMS, Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D), Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS21), FIQ, HADS, MHI, and VAS. As can be seen in Table 4, statistically significant (p = 0.009) decreases in depression were found. Statistically significant heterogeneity was observed while inconsistency was categorized as moderate (95% CI = low to large). The NNT was 6 with a percentile improvement of 15% and an estimated 5.1 million inactive US adults with AORD reducing their depression if they started exercising regularly. Small-study effects were not statistically significant (p = 0.08). With each result deleted from the model once, results remained statistically significant across all deletions, ranging from -0.52 (95% CI, -0.68 to -0.37) to -0.32 (95% CI, -0.61 to -0.0.3). Cumulative meta-analysis, ranked by year, demonstrated that improvements have been statistically significant and remained stable since 2013. Decreases in depression were similar to group-level results when collapsed so that only one ES represented each study (ES, -0.38, 95% CI, -0.70 to -0.07, p = 0.02; Q = 45.6, p < 0.001;  $I^2$  = 73.7%, 95% CI, 54.3% to 84.8%, tau<sup>2</sup> = 0.21). With three outliers deleted from the model, improvements in depression remained statistically significant, slightly larger, but with non-significant heterogeneity and overall inconsistency categorized as very low (ES, -0.43, 95% CI, -0.60 to -0.26, p < 0.001; Q = 5.7, p =0.89;  $I^2$  = 0%, 95% CI, 0% to 19.3%, tau<sup>2</sup> = 0). Quality-of-life was assessed in 12 studies 40-47 49 51-53 using the FIQ, Health Assessment Questionnaire (HAQ), Quality of Life Scale (QOLS), SF-12, and SF-36. As shown in Table 4, statistically significant (p < 0.0001) improvements in quality-of-life were found. Statistically significant heterogeneity was observed while inconsistency was categorized

as large (95% CI = low to large). The NNT was 4 with a percentile improvement of 23.1% and an estimated 8.6 million inactive US adults with AORD improving their quality-of-life if they started exercising regularly. Statistically significant small-study effects were observed (p < 0.001). With each result deleted from the model once, results remained statistically significant across all deletions, ranging from 0.58 (95% CI, 0.35 to 0.81) to 0.70 (95% CI, 0.41 to 0.99). Cumulative meta-analysis, ranked by year, demonstrated that improvements have been statistically significant since 2001, but with a trend towards a decrease in the magnitude of effect. Increases in quality-of-life were similar to group-level results when collapsed so that only one ES represented each study (ES, 0.63, 95% CI, 0.34 to 0.92, p < 0.001; Q = 30.9, p = 0.001;  $I^2$  = 64.3%, 95% CI, 33.9% to 80.8%,  $tau^2 = 0.14$ ). With four outliers deleted from the model. improvements in quality-of-life remained statistically significant, similar in magnitude, but with non-significant heterogeneity and overall inconsistency categorized as low (ES, 0.64, 95% CI, 0.39 to 0.90, p < 0.001; Q = 11.4, p = 0.18;  $I^2$  = 29.8%, 95% CI, 0% to 67.5%,  $tau^2 = 0.04$ ). Maximum oxygen consumption (VO2<sub>max</sub> in ml·kg<sup>-1</sup> min<sup>-1</sup>) was assessed in 5 studies<sup>46-48</sup> <sup>51</sup> <sup>52</sup> using various maximal treadmill tests while one study used a submaximal step test (Canadian Aerobic Fitness Test). As can be seen in Table 4, statistically significant (p = 0.001) improvements in VO2<sub>max</sub> were observed. Statistically significant heterogeneity was observed while inconsistency was categorized as moderate (95% CI = low to large). The NNT was 3 with a percentile improvement of 25.7% and an estimated 9.5 million inactive US adults with AORD improving their relative VO2<sub>max</sub> if they started

exercising regularly. No statistically significant small-study effects were observed (p =

0.18). With each result deleted from the model once, results remained statistically significant across all deletions, ranging from 1.80 ml·kg<sup>-1</sup>·min<sup>-1</sup> (95% CI, 0.58 to 3.01) to 2.47 ml kg<sup>-1</sup> min<sup>-1</sup> (95% CI, 1.25 to 3.69). Cumulative meta-analysis, ranked by year. demonstrated that improvements have been statistically significant since 2003, but with a trend towards a decrease in the magnitude of effect over time. Increases in VO2<sub>max</sub> were similar to group-level results when collapsed so that only one ES represented each study (ES, 2.01 ml·kg<sup>-1</sup>·min<sup>-1</sup>, 95% CI, 0.59 to 3.44, p = 0.01; Q = 19.4, p = 0.001;  $I^2 = 79.4\%$ , 95% CI, 51.2% to 91.3%, tau<sup>2</sup> = 1.7). With outliers deleted from the model, improvements in VO2<sub>max</sub> were smaller, with non-significant heterogeneity and overall inconsistency categorized as low (ES, 1.93 ml·kg<sup>-1</sup>·min<sup>-1</sup>, 95% CI, 0.83 to 3.02, p = 0.001; Q = 0.03, p = 0.86;  $I^2$  = 0%, 95% CI, 0% to 0%, tau<sup>2</sup> = 0). Upper and lower body *muscular strength* was assessed in five studies<sup>45 47-49 52</sup> using free weights, grip strength, isokinetic strength and the sit-to-stand test with free weights. As shown in Table 4, statistically significant (p < 0.001) improvements in strength were observed. No statistically significant heterogeneity or mean inconsistency was observed (95% CI = none to moderate). The NNT was 4 with a percentile improvement of 22.2% and an estimated 8 million inactive US adults with AORD improving their strength if they started exercising regularly. No statistically significant small-study effects were observed (p = 0.65). With each result deleted from the model once, results remained statistically significant across all deletions, ranging from 0.50 (95% CI, 0.21 to 0.79) to 0.68 (95% CI, 0.39 to 0.96). Cumulative meta-analysis, ranked by year, demonstrated that improvements in strength have been statistically significant since the first included study in 1989. 48 Changes in strength were similar to group-level results when collapsed

so that only one ES represented each study (ES, 0.59, 95% CI, 0.33 to 0.85, p < 0.001;

Q = 3.5, p = 0.48;  $I^2$  = 0%, 95% CI, 0% to 76.2%,  $tau^2$  = 0). There were no outliers.

Insufficient data were available to analyze *BMI*. The one study that did provide change outcome results for BMI reported no statistically significant changes.<sup>46</sup>

## DISCUSSION

# **Overall Findings**

The primary purpose of the current systematic review with meta-analysis was to examine the effects of exercise (aerobic, strength training, or both) on anxiety in adults with AORD. The overall findings, a primary purpose of meta-analysis, 55 suggest that exercise results in both statistically significant and practically important reductions in anxiety among adults with selected types of AORD. These findings are supported by (1) a magnitude of effect comparable to or greater than anxiolytics. <sup>56</sup> (2) a large percentile improvement (15.5), (3) low NNT (6), large number of physically inactive US adults with AORD who could benefit from exercising regularly (5.3 million), (4) similar findings when examined at the study versus group level, (5) continued existence of a statistically significant effect when each result was deleted from the analysis once, (6) similar findings when outliers were deleted and statistical heterogeneity was reduced to a nonsignificant effect and overall inconsistency to zero, and (7) a consistent finding of improvements in anxiety since the first included study was reported in 1989.48 Based on GRADE, it was concluded that anxiety was a critical outcome and that further research would unlikely change the direction of effect.

While the current findings are encouraging, it is interesting to note that cumulative meta-analysis revealed a distinct trend for a reduction in the pooled ES over time (from -

1.47 in 1989 to -0.40 in 2016) and based on meta-regression, a statistically significant association between greater reductions in anxiety with older versus more recent studies. While the specific reasons for this could not be determined, it may be that the experimental design and conduct of studies have improved over time. However, from the investigative team's perspective, it is highly unlikely that the results will become nonsignificant in future years. The former notwithstanding, the general conclusion that exercise reduces anxiety in adults with selected types of AORD may need to be viewed with some caution given that the majority of included studies consisted of participants with fibromyalgia<sup>40 41 45 46 49-53</sup> while the remaining studies included those with osteoarthritis and/or rheumatoid arthritis. 42-44 47 48 While meta-regression revealed no statistically significant association between type of AORD and changes in anxiety, such analyses may have been underpowered to detect such an association. In addition, since other types of AORD such as systemic lupus erythematosus were not included, generalizing to populations with other types of AORD may not be appropriate. The final meta-regression model resulted in two statistically significant variables being included with earlier year of publication and studies at an unclear versus low risk of bias for incomplete outcome data associated with greater reductions in anxiety. These findings further reinforce the influence of year of publication on changes in anxiety in the current systematic review with meta-analysis, a potential reason for such having been previously mentioned. The greater reductions observed for studies at an unclear versus low risk of bias suggests that more poorly reported, and possibly conducted, studies may have led to inflated findings.

In addition to statistically significant and practically important improvements in anxiety, similar improvements were also observed for all secondary outcomes assessed (physical function, pain, depression, quality of life, VO2<sub>max</sub> in ml·kg<sup>-1</sup>·min<sup>-1</sup>, muscular strength). These findings are important because unlike pharmacologic interventions that are usually targeted to address one condition, exercise has the potential to improve multiple physiological and psychological outcomes. Given the former, it would seem plausible to suggest that continued efforts be made to increase the exercise and physical activity levels of adults with AORD.

# Implications for Research

There are at least four implications for the conduct and reporting of future research on exercise and anxiety in adults with AORD. First, since only five of the studies included participants with osteoarthritis and/or rheumatoid arthritis, future randomized controlled trials on exercise and anxiety in these populations appear warranted. Second, exercise was performed indoors in the majority of included studies. Given that previous research has suggested the exercise performed outdoors may have better mood-enhancing effects than indoor exercise, <sup>57 58</sup> future research examining this phenomenon with respect to anxiety as well as other outcomes in adults with AORD seems appropriate. Third, future studies should focus on examining the dose-response effects of exercise on anxiety in adults with AORD and report complete information on the characteristics of the intervention, including intervention fidelity. <sup>59</sup> Such information is critical for the development of evidence-based recommendations aimed at practitioners. Fourth, since more than half of the studies were considered to be at high or unclear risk of bias with respect to allocation concealment, blinding of outcome assessors, and incomplete

outcome reporting, future studies should address these issues in their experimental design and report such information. Notably, while all included studies were considered to be at a high risk of bias with respect to blinding of participants, this is difficult for researchers to address since unlike pharmacologic studies, it is almost impossible to blind intervention participants to group assignment in exercise intervention studies.

# **Implications for Practice**

The results of this study appear to have important implications for practice. First, since changes in both anxiety and secondary outcomes resulted in statistically significant and practically important improvements, exercise may be more vital than any other intervention given the apparent multiple benefits of such. While the current systematic review with meta-analysis was unable to establish with any degree of certainty the dose-response effects of exercise on anxiety in adults with AORD, it would appear prudent to adhere to the Active Adult or Active Older Adult Guidelines from the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans Physical Activity Guidelines<sup>17</sup> as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Broadly, this includes aerobic activities on most, if not all, days of the week, muscle strengthening activities at least 2 days per week, balance exercises at least 3 days per week, and flexibility exercises on a daily basis.

# **Strengths and Limitations**

There are at least four apparent *strengths* of the current study. First, to the best of our knowledge, this is the first systematic review with meta-analysis to examine, as a primary outcome, the effects of exercise on anxiety in adults with AORD. This is important given (1) the prevalence of AORD, 1 (2) the expected future increase in the

prevalence of AORD,<sup>2</sup> (3) the financial costs associated with AORD,<sup>3</sup> and (4) the previously reported finding that the prevalence of anxiety is almost twice that of depression.<sup>8</sup> Second, a novel and recently developed approach, the IVhet model, was used to pool findings.<sup>27</sup> This resulted in more robust estimates than those derived from the traditional random-effects model.<sup>28</sup> This is noteworthy given the need to provide the most accurate results possible when examining the effects of an intervention on selected outcome(s). Third, the statistically significant and practically relevant improvements in anxiety as well as selected secondary outcomes observed in the current systematic review with meta-analysis should be useful to practitioners and policy-makers for making informed decisions about the role of exercise in the treatment of anxiety among adults with selected types of AORD. Fourth, the current findings as well as gaps in the reviewed literature provide researchers with direction for the conduct and reporting of future research on this topic.

While there are several strengths to this study, there are also at least four potential *limitations*. First, similar to any aggregate data meta-analysis, the potential for ecological fallacy exists. Thus, it may be that the observed findings in the current study would not apply at the individual participant level. Second, and also common to any type of aggregate data meta-analysis, meta-regression results do not support causal inferences because the included studies are not randomly assigned to covariates.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, the associations observed in the current investigation would need to be assessed in appropriately powered randomized trials. Third, while a large number of statistical tests were conducted, no adjustments were made for such. Thus, some findings could have been nothing more than the play of chance. However, common to

most aggregate data meta-analyses, no adjustments for multiple testing were made because of concerns about missing possibly important findings that could be tested in original trials.<sup>35</sup> Fourth, since anxiety was assessed using self-report instruments,<sup>40-53</sup> the possibility of reporting bias in the original studies existed.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Exercise is associated with reductions in anxiety among adults with selected types of AORD. However, a need exists for additional, well-designed, randomized controlled trials on this topic.

# **CONTRIBUTORS**

GAK was responsible for the conception and design, acquisition of data, analysis and interpretation of data, drafting the initial manuscript and revising it critically for important intellectual content. KSK was responsible for the conception and design, acquisition of data, drafting the initial manuscript, and revising all drafts critically for important intellectual content. LFC was responsible for the conception and design, acquisition of data, drafting the initial manuscript, and revising all drafts critically for important intellectual content. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

#### REGISTRATION

In accordance with Primary Reporting Items for Systematics Reviews and Meta-Analyses, our systematic review with network meta-analysis was registered with the International Prospective Register of Systematic Reviews (PROSPERO) on October 4, 2016 (registration number CRD42016048728).

#### COMPETING INTERESTS

720 None.

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Table 1. Study characteristics.

Study and Year Country		Participants	Exercise	Anxiety	
			Intervention	Assessment	
Baptista et al.,	Brazil	Women (N = 80) 18-65 yrs of age with FM assigned	Dance exercise 2 x/wk, 60 min/session,	STAI	
2012 <sup>40</sup>		to exercise (n = 40, age, $\overline{x}$ = 49.5 yrs) or control (n	for 12 wks		
		= 40, age, $\overline{x}$ = 49.1 yrs) group			
Beltran, 2003 <sup>41</sup>	United	Women (N = 21) 22-65 yrs of age with FM assigned	Aerobic aquatic exercise, 3 x/wk, 25	AIMS	
	States	exercise (n = 11, age, $\bar{x} \pm SD = 50.1 \pm 12.6$ yrs) or	min/session, 60-85% MHR, for 10 wks		
		control (n = 10, age, $\bar{x} \pm SD = 53.7 \pm 6.9 \text{ yrs}$ )			
		group			
Cheung et al.,	United	Men and women (N=51) ≥ 65 yrs of age with knee	Aerobic exercise, 5 x/wk, 20-30	HADS	
2017 42	States	OA assigned to exercise (n = 28, age, $\overline{x} \pm SD$ =	min/session for 8 wks, and strength		
		74.4 $\pm$ 7.5 yrs), or control (n = 23, age, $\overline{\times}$ $\pm$ SD =	exercise 3 x/wk, 30 min/session for 8 wks		
		71.8 ± 8.0 yrs) group	(10+ exercises)		
Fransen et al.,	Australia	Men and women (N=96) 59-85 yrs of age with hip or	Hydrotherapy exercises in warm water, 2	DASS21	
2007 <sup>43</sup>		knee OA assigned to hydrotherapy (n = 55, age, $\overline{x}$	x/wk, 60 min/session, for 12 wks		
		$\pm$ SD = 70 $\pm$ 6.3 yrs), or wait-list control (n = 41,			
		age, $\overline{\times} \pm SD = 69.6 \pm 6.1 \text{ yrs}$ ) group			
French et al.,	Ireland	Men and women (N = 88) 40-80 yrs of age with hip	Aerobic & strength training, 30	HADS	
2013 <sup>44</sup>		OA assigned to exercise (n = 45, age, $\overline{\times} \pm SD$ =	min/session, for 8 wks, up to 5 strength		

		61.8 $\pm$ 9.7 yrs), or control (n = 43, age, $\times \pm$ SD =	exercises	
		60.8 ± 9.7 yrs) group		
Gowans et al.,	Canada	Men and women (N = 57) with FM assigned to an	Aerobic exercise (2 walking/jogging	MHI, STAI
2001 <sup>45</sup>		exercise (n = 30, age, $\overline{\times}$ ± SD = 44.6 ± 8.7 yrs), or	classes in a gym, 1 pool class), 3 x/wk,	
		control (n = 27, age, $\overline{\times} \pm SD = 49.8 \pm 7.3$ yrs) group	30 min/session, 60-75% MHR, for 23 wks	
Jones et al.,	United	Men and women (N = 101) 18-65 yrs of age with	Aerobic exercise 3 x/wk, 30 min/session,	FIQ (Anxiety)
2008 <sup>46</sup>	States	FM assigned to an exercise (n = 47, age, $\overline{\times} \pm SD$ =	40-50% MHR & strength exercise, 3	
		49.6 $\pm$ 7.7 yrs), or control (n = 54, age, $\times$ $\pm$ SD =	x/wk, 10 min/session, for 24 wks	
		49.8 ± 7.9 yrs) group		
Komatireddy et	United	Men and women (n = 49), 35-76 yrs of age with RA	Circuit weight training with light loads and	AIMS
al. <sup>47</sup>	States	assigned to exercise (n = 25, $\overline{\times}$ ± SD = 57.7 ± 9.8	high repetitions, 7 exercises, 2–3	
		yrs of age, range 40–72 yrs) or control (n = 24, $\overline{\times}$ ±	circuits/session, 12-15 reps, 30-second	
		SD = 60.5 ± 11 yrs of age, range 35–76 yrs) group	rest between sets, 20–27 min/session,	
			$\geq$ 3 x/wk, RPE of 3–4, for 12 wks	
Minor et al.,	United	Men and women (N = 115) 21–83 yrs of age with	Aerobic aquatics or walking group, 3	AIMS
1989 <sup>48</sup>	States	RA or OA assigned to a pool (n = 47), walking (n =	x/wk, 60 min/session (30 min of this was	
		36) or control group (n = 32)	aerobic), 60-80% MHR, for 12 wks	
Munguia-	Spain	Men and women (N = 60) 18-60 yrs of age with FM	Aerobic aquatic exercise, 3 x/wk, 20-30	STAI
Izquieerdo &		assigned to exercise (n = 35, $\overline{\times}$ ± SD = 50.0 ± 7.0	min/session, 50-80% MHR, & strength	
Legaz-Arrese,		yrs) or control (n = 25 $\times \pm$ SD = 46.0 $\pm$ 8.0 yrs)	exercise 3 x/wk, 8-20 min/session, 1-3	

2008 <sup>49</sup>		group	sets, 8-15 reps, for 16 wks	
Sanudo et al.,	Spain	Women (N = 32) with FM assigned to exercise (n =	Aerobic/interval training, 2 x/wk, 30-35	VAS
2015 <sup>50</sup>		16, $\overline{\times}$ ± SD = 55.0 ± 8.0 yrs of age), or control (n =	min/session, 60-80% MHR, for 24 weeks	
		16, $\overline{\times}$ ± SD = 58.0 ± 6.9 yrs of age) group		
Schachter et al.,	Canada	Women (N = 143) 20–55 yrs of age with FM	Low impact, videotape-based, aerobic	FIQ (Anxiety)
2003 <sup>51</sup>		assigned to a short bout (n = 56, $\overline{\times} \pm SD = 41.9 \pm$	exercise to music. Short bout, 2 x/d, 7.1	
		8.6 yrs of age), long bout (n = 51, $\overline{\times}$ ± SD = 41.3 ±	x/wk, 12.3 min/session, 60% HRR; Long-	
		8.7 yrs of age), or control group (n = 36, $\overline{\times}$ ± SD =	bout group: 1 x/d, 3.6 x/wk, 24.5	
		42.5 ± 6.7 yrs of age)	min/session, 60% HRR, for 16 wks	
Tomas-Carus et	Portugal	Women with FM (N = 33) assigned to aquatic	Pool exercises performed in warm water,	FIQ (Anxiety),
al., 2008 <sup>52</sup>		exercise (n = 17, $\overline{\times}$ ± SD = 50.7 ± 10.6 yrs of age)	3 x/wk, 20 min, aerobic phase, 60-65%	STAI
		or control group (n = 16, $\overline{\times}$ ± SD = 50.9 ± 6.7 yrs of	MHR, strength exercise, 20 min, 4 sets,	
		age)	10 reps, for 32 wks	
Tomas-Carus et	Portugal	Women with FM (N = 34) assigned to aquatic	Pool exercises performed in warm water,	FIQ (Anxiety)
al., 2007 <sup>53</sup>		exercise (n = 17, $\overline{\times}$ ± SD = 51 ± 10.0 yrs of age) or	3 x/wk, 20 min, aerobic phase, 60-65%	
		control group (n = 17, $\overline{\times}$ ± SD = 51 ± 9.0 yrs of age)	MHR, strength exercises, 20 min, 4 sets,	
			10 reps, for 12 wks	

Notes: Description of groups from each study limited to those that met the criteria for inclusion;  $\bar{x}$  ± SD, mean  $\pm$  standard deviation; AIMS, Arthritis Measurement Impact Scale; DASS21, Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale; FIQ, Fibromyalgia Impact Questionnaire; FM, fibromyalgia; HADS, Hospital Anxiety & Depression Scale; HRR, heart rate reserve; MHI, Mental Health Inventory; min, minutes; MHR, maximum heart rate; STAI,

State-Trait Anxiety Inventory; MHR, maximum heart rate; OA, osteoarthritis; RA, rheumatoid arthritis; reps, repetitions; RPE, rating of perceived exertion; VAS, Visual Analog Scale; wk(s), week(s); yrs, years;



Table 2. Baseline characteristics of participants.

		Exercise	Control					
Variable	Groups/Participants	≅ <u>+</u> SD	Median	Range	Groups/Participants	≅ <u>+</u> SD	Median	Range
Age (years)	14/458	53.4 <u>+</u> 9.7	50	41 – 74	13/349	54.9 <u>+</u> 8.8	50	43 - 72
BMI (kg·m²)	7/204	29.0 <u>+</u> 1.5	29	27 - 31	7/170	28.4 <u>+</u> 1.7	28	27 – 31
VO <sub>2max</sub> (ml·kg <sup>-1</sup> ·min <sup>-1</sup> )	7/245	21.3 <u>+</u> 2.3	21	19 – 24	5/101	20.7 <u>+</u> 2.7	21	17 – 24

Notes: Groups represents number of exercise and control groups reporting data;  $\overline{\times}$  + SD, mean  $\underline{+}$  standard deviation; BMI, body mass index; VO<sub>2max</sub>, maximum oxygen consumption.

Table 3. Exercise program characteristics.

Variable	Groups/Participants	≅ <u>+</u> SD	Median	Range
Length (weeks)	16/514	16 <u>+</u> 7	14	8 - 32
Frequency (times/week)	14/469	3.3 <u>+</u> 1.3	3	2 – 7
Duration (min/session)	14/450	28.8 <u>+</u> 14.3	30	10 – 60
Minutes per week	11/407	85.5 <u>+</u> 21.2	88	60 – 120
Minutes per week (adj)	7/277	61.3 <u>+</u> 22.7	58	33 – 99
Compliance (%)	8/312	74.3 <u>+</u> 19	80	38 - 97

Notes: Groups represents number of exercise groups reporting data;  $\overline{\times} \pm SD$ , mean  $\pm$  standard deviation; min, minutes; adj, adjusted for compliance.

Table 4. Results for primary and secondary outcomes (data reported as standardized effect size unless otherwise noted).

Variable	ES (#) Participants (#)		≅ (95% CI)	Q (p)	I <sup>2</sup> (95% CI)	$\tau^2$	
Primary outcome							
- Anxiety	16	883	-0.40 (-0.65, -0.15)*	40.3 (<0.001)**	62.8 (36.2, 78.3	0.14	
Secondary outcomes							
- Physical function	12	677	0.66 (0.34, 0.97)*	36.0 (0.0002)**	69.4 (44.5, 83.1)	0.19	
- Pain	15	803	-0.62 (-1.12, -0.11)*	128.6 (<0.001)**	89.1 (83.7, 92.7)	0.75	
- QOL	13	730	0.63 (0.35, 0.91)*	32.4 (0.001)**	63.0 (32.7, 79.7)	0.15	
- Depression	15	813	-0.38 (-0.67, -0.10)*	46.3 (<0.001)**	69.7 (48.6, 82.2)	0.20	
- VO2max (ml·kg <sup>-1</sup> ·min <sup>-1</sup> )	7	346	2.01 (0.85, 3.2)*	20.2 (0.003)**	70.3 (35.0, 86.4)	1.40	
- Muscular strength	6	261	0.59 (0.33, 0.85)*	3.9 (0.6)	0 (0, 67.1)	0	

Notes: ES, effect size; #, number;  $\overline{\times}$  (95% CI), mean effect size and 95% confidence interval; Q (p), Cochran Q statistic and alpha value for Q;  $I^2$  (95% CI), I-squared and 95% confidence interval;  $\tau^2$ , tau-squared; \*, statistically significant (two-tailed alpha value  $\leq$  0.05 and non-overlapping 95% confidence intervals); \*\*, statistically significant (alpha value  $\leq$  0.10);

Coefficient + SE Variable *t* (p) 95% CI 0.031 + 0.009 3.58 (0.01) Year of publication 0.010 to 0.051 Incomplete data -0.448 <u>+</u> 0.139 -3.23 (0.01) -0.763 to -.0134 0.007 <u>+</u> 0.004 Minutes of training per week 1.71 (0.13) -0.002 to 0.016 -61.940 <u>+</u> 17.152 Intercept -3.61 (0.01) -103.17 to -20.71

Table 5. Final multiple regression model for changes in anxiety (N = 16).

Notes: SE, standard error; t, t-value; p, alpha value for t; CI, confidence interval.

## **FIGURE LEGEND**

- Figure 1. Flow diagram depicting the search process.
- Figure 2. Risk of bias results using the Cochrane Risk of Bias Assessment Instrument.
- Figure 3. Forest plot for changes in anxiety.
- Figure 4. Funnel plot for changes in anxiety.
- Figure 5. Cumulative meta-analysis for changes in anxiety.

## **SUPPLEMENTARY FILES**

- Supplementary File 1. Search strategy for PubMed.
- Supplementary file 2. List of excluded studies, including reasons for exclusion.
- Supplementary file 3. Study-level risk of bias results using the Cochrane Risk of Bias Assessment Instrument.
- Supplementary file 4. Simple meta-regression results with changes in anxiety as the outcome.
- Supplementary file 5. Evidence profile for changes in anxiety based on GRADE.

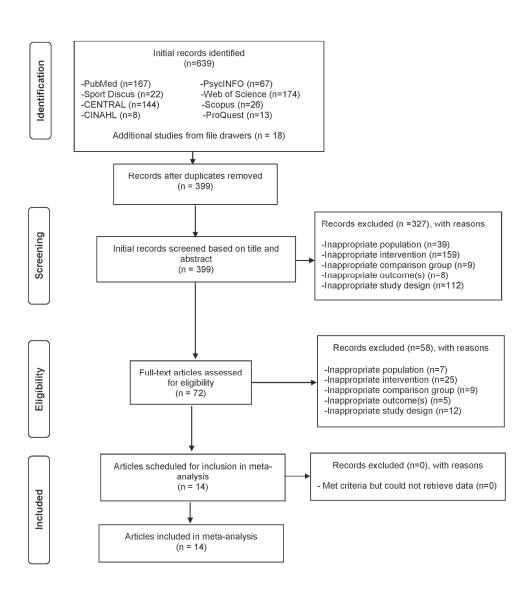


Figure 1. Flow diagram depicting the search process.

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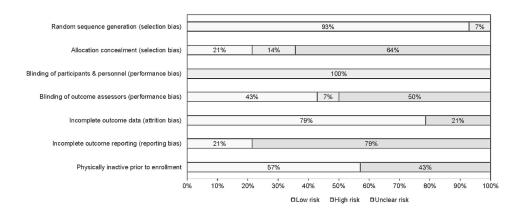
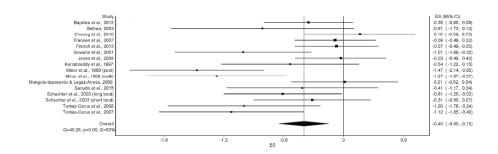
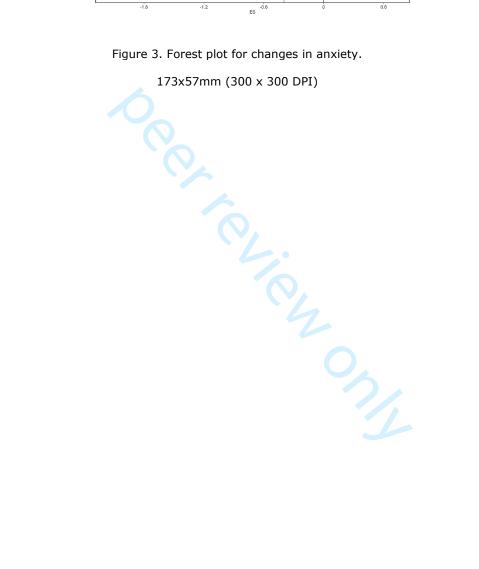


Figure 2. Risk of bias results using the Cochrane Risk of Bias Assessment Instrument.

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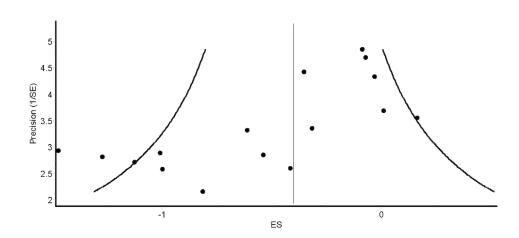


Figure 4. Funnel plot for changes in anxiety.

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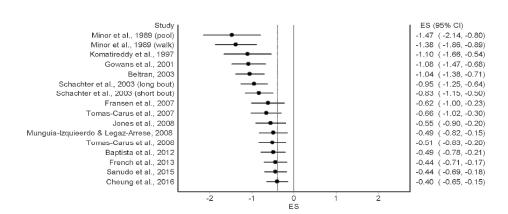
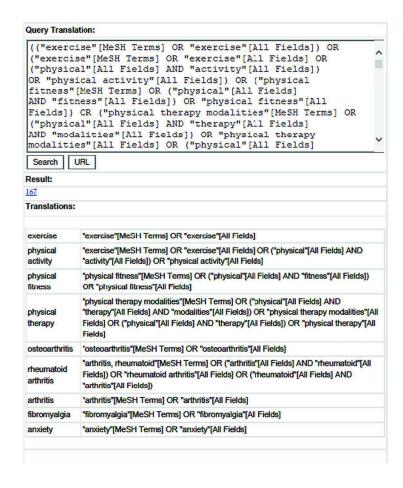


Figure 5. Cumulative meta-analysis for changes in anxiety.

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Details - PubMed - NCBI

## Search Details



https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/details?querykey=9

1/5/2017

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Supplementary File 2. Excluded Studies, including reasons for exclusion.

- 1. 12th Commonwealth International Sport conference, 19-23 July 2002, Manchester, United Kingdom: abstract book. London;: Association of Commonwealth Universities 2002. *inappropriate study design*
- 2. ABSTRACTS. Journal of Orthopaedic & Sports Physical Therapy 2005;35(6):389-96. inappropriate study design
- 3. Fibromyalgia: poorly understood; treatments are disappointing. *Prescrire international* 2009;18(102):169-73. [published Online First: 2009/09/15] *inappropriate study design*
- 4. A Controlled Examination of Medical and Psychosocial Factors Associated With Low Back Pain in Combination With Widespread Musculoskeletal Pain. *Physical therapy* 2009;89(8):786-803. *inappropriate study design*
- 5. Acupuncture. Focus on Alternative and Complementary Therapies 2010;15(2):163-69. doi: 10.1211/fact.15.2.0065 inappropriate intervention
- 6. 2013 SYR Accepted Poster Abstracts. *International journal of yoga therapy* 2013;23 Suppl:32-53. [published Online First: 2013/01/01] *inappropriate study design*
- 7. Abbott R, Whear R, Nikolaou V, et al. Tumour necrosis factor-alpha inhibitor therapy in chronic physical illness: A systematic review and meta-analysis of the effect on depression and anxiety. *Journal of psychosomatic research* 2015;79(3):175-84. doi: 10.1016/j.jpsychores.2015.04.008 [published Online First: 2015/05/04] *inappropriate study design*
- 8. Adachi T, Nakae A, Maruo T, et al. Validation of the Japanese Version of the Pain Self-Efficacy Questionnaire in Japanese Patients with Chronic Pain. *Pain Medicine* 2014;15(8):1405-17. doi: 10.1111/pme.12446 *inappropriate study design*
- Akhavan J. The effect of a dyadic intervention on self-efficacy, physical functioning, and anxiety/depression in older adults post joint replacement surgery [Ph.D.]. University of California, Los Angeles, 2008. *inappropriate study design*
- 10. Akman-Demir G, Saip S, Siva A. Behçet's disease. Current Treatment Options in Neurology 2011;13(3):290-310. doi: 10.1007/s11940-011-0120-2 inappropriate study design
- 11. Alamo MM, Moral RR, de Torres LAP. Evaluation of a patient-centred approach in generalized musculoskeletal chronic pain/fibromyalgia patients in primary care. Patient education and counseling 2002;48(1):23-31. doi: 10.1016/S0738-3991(02)00095-2 inappropriate intervention
- 12. Alayli G, Kuru O, Bilgici A. The effects of aerobic exercise and home exercise on pain and disability in patients with knee osteoarthritis. [Turkish]. Journal of Rheumatology and Medical Rehabilitation 2007; 18(2). <a href="http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/o/cochrane/clcentral/articles/761/CN-00707761/frame.html">http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/o/cochrane/clcentral/articles/761/CN-00707761/frame.html</a>. inappropriate comparison group
- 13. Alipour B, Homayouni-Rad A, Vaghef-Mehrabany E, et al. Effects of Lactobacillus casei supplementation on disease activity and inflammatory cytokines in rheumatoid arthritis patients: a randomized double-blind clinical trial. *International journal of rheumatic diseases* 2014;17(5):519-27. doi: 10.1111/1756-185X.12333 inappropriate intervention

- 14. Ambrose KR, Golightly YM. Physical exercise as non-pharmacological treatment of chronic pain: Why and when. *Best Practice & Research in Clinical Rheumatology* 2015;29(1):120-30. doi: 10.1016/j.berh.2015.04.022 *inappropriate study design*
- Andrews NE, Strong J, Meredith PJ. Activity Pacing, Avoidance, Endurance, and Associations With Patient Functioning in Chronic Pain: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. Archives of physical medicine and rehabilitation 2012;93(11):2109-21. doi: 10.1016/j.apmr.2012.05.029 inappropriate study design
- 16. Ang D, Jensen M, Steiner J, et al. Combining cognitive-behavioral therapy and milnacipran for fibromyalgia: a feasibility randomized-controlled trial. *The Clinical journal of pain* 2013; 29(9). <a href="http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/o/cochrane/clcentral/articles/880/CN-00918880/frame.html">http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/o/cochrane/clcentral/articles/880/CN-00918880/frame.html</a>. inappropriate study design
- 17. Appelbaum KA, Blanchard EB, Hickling EJ, et al. Cognitive behavioral treatment of a veteran population with moderate to severe rheumatoid arthritis. *Behavior Therapy* 1988;19(4):489-502. doi: 10.1016/S0005-7894(88)80019-4 *inappropriate intervention*
- 18. Archer T, Josefsson T, Lindwall M. Effects of Physical Exercise on Depressive Symptoms and Biomarkers in Depression. *Cns & Neurological Disorders-Drug Targets* 2014;13(10):1640-53. *inappropriate study design*
- Arcos-Carmona IM, Castro-Sanchez AM, Mataran-Penarrocha GA, et al. [Effects of aerobic exercise program and relaxation techniques on anxiety, quality of sleep, depression, and quality of life in patients with fibromyalgia: a randomized controlled trial]. *Medicina clinica* 2011;137(9):398-401. doi: 10.1016/j.medcli.2010.09.045 [published Online First: 2011/02/25] inappropriate intervention
- 20. Arends RY, Bode C, Taal E, et al. A goal management intervention for polyarthritis patients: rationale and design of a randomized controlled trial. *BMC musculoskeletal disorders* 2013;14:239. doi: 10.1186/1471-2474-14-239 [published Online First: 2013/08/15] *inappropriate intervention*
- 21. Arne M, Janson C, Janson S, et al. Physical activity and quality of life in subjects with chronic disease: chronic obstructive pulmonary disease compared with rheumatoid arthritis and diabetes mellitus. *Scandinavian journal of primary health care* 2009;27(3):141-7. doi: 10.1080/02813430902808643 [published Online First: 2009/03/24] *inappropriate study design*
- 22. Arnold L, Wang F, Ahl J, et al. Improvement in multiple dimensions of fatigue in patients with fibromyalgia treated with duloxetine: secondary analysis of a randomized, placebo-controlled trial. *Arthritis research & therapy* 2011; 13(3). <a href="http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/o/cochrane/clcentral/articles/474/CN-00843474/frame.html">http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/o/cochrane/clcentral/articles/474/CN-00843474/frame.html</a>. *inappropriate intervention*
- 23. Arnold L, Zlateva G, Sadosky A, et al. Correlations between Fibromyalgia Symptom and Function Domains and Patient Global Impression of Change: A Pooled Analysis of Three Randomized, Placebo-Controlled Trials of Pregabalin. Pain medicine (Malden, Mass) 2011; 12(2). <a href="http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/o/cochrane/clcentral/articles/608/CN-01016608/frame.html">http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/o/cochrane/clcentral/articles/608/CN-01016608/frame.html</a>. inappropriate study design

- 24. Arnold LM. Strategies for managing fibromyalgia. *The American journal of medicine* 2009;122(12 Suppl):S31-43. doi: 10.1016/j.amjmed.2009.09.009 [published Online First: 2010/01/09] *inappropriate study design*
- 25. Arnold LM, Arsenault P, Huffman C, et al. Once daily controlled-release pregabalin in the treatment of patients with fibromyalgia: A phase III, double-blind, randomized withdrawal, placebo-controlled study. *Current Medical Research and Opinion* 2014;30(10):2069-83. doi: 10.1185/03007995.2014.928275 inappropriate intervention
- 26. Arnold LM, Clauw D, Wang F, et al. Flexible dosed duloxetine in the treatment of fibromyalgia: a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial. *The Journal of rheumatology* 2010;37(12):2578-86. doi: 10.3899/jrheum.100365 [published Online First: 2010/09/17] *inappropriate intervention*
- 27. Arnold LM, Crofford LJ, Martin SA, et al. The effect of anxiety and depression on improvements in pain in a randomized, controlled trial of pregabalin for treatment of fibromyalgia. *Pain Medicine* 2007;8(8):633-38. doi: 10.1111/j.1526-4637.2007.00332.x *inappropriate intervention*
- 28. Arnold LM, Russell IJ, Diri EW, et al. A 14-week, randomized, double-blinded, placebo-controlled monotherapy trial of pregabalin in patients with fibromyalgia. *The Journal of Pain* 2008;9(9):792-805. doi: 10.1016/j.jpain.2008.03.013 inappropriate intervention
- 29. Arnold LM, Wang F, Ahl J, et al. Improvement in multiple dimensions of fatigue in patients with fibromyalgia treated with duloxetine: secondary analysis of a randomized, placebo-controlled trial. *Arthritis research & therapy* 2011;13(3):R86. doi: 10.1186/ar3359 [published Online First: 2011/06/15] *inappropriate intervention*
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Supplementary File 3. Study-level risk of bias results using the Cochrane Collaboration Instrument.

Reference	Random	Allocation	Blinding (Participants	Blinding (Outcome	Incomplete	Selective	Inactive
	Sequence	Concealment	& Personnel)	Assessors)	Outcome Data	Reporting	
Baptista et al., 2012 <sup>40</sup>	low	low	high	low	low	low	unclear
Beltran, 2003 <sup>41</sup>	low	unclear	high	unclear	low	unclear	low
Cheung et al., 2017 42	low	high	high	unclear	low	low	unclear
Fransen et al., 2007 <sup>43</sup>	low	unclear	high	low	low	low	low
French et al., 2013 <sup>44</sup>	low	low	high	high	low	unclear	unclear
Gowans et al., 2001 <sup>45</sup>	low	unclear	high	low	low	unclear	unclear
Jones et al., 2008 <sup>46</sup>	low	unclear	high	unclear	low	unclear	low
Komatireddy et al.47	low	unclear	high	low	low	unclear	unclear
Minor et al., 1989 <sup>48</sup>	low	unclear	high	unclear	unclear	unclear	low
Munguia-Izquieerdo &	low	unclear	high	low	low	unclear	low
Legaz-Arrese, 2008 <sup>49</sup>							
Sanudo et al., 2015 <sup>50</sup>	low	unclear	high	unclear	unclear	unclear	unclear
Schachter et al., 2003 <sup>51</sup>	high	high	high	unclear	low	unclear	low
Tomas-Carus et al., 2008 <sup>52</sup>	low	low	high	low	low	unclear	low
Tomas-Carus et al., 2007 <sup>53</sup>	low	unclear	high	unclear	unclear	unclear	low

Notes: low, low risk of bias; high, high risk of bias; unclear, unclear risk of bias.

Supplementary file 4. Simple meta-regression results with changes in anxiety as the outcome.

Comparison	ES (#)	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F(p)
Study Characteristics				
- Journal impact factor	16	.22	.05	0.4(0.52)
- Year of publication	16	.75	.56	51.5(<0.001)*
- Country study conducted (USA vs. other)	16	.13	.02	0.2(0.69)
- Type of control (exposure vs. no exposure) <sup>a</sup>	16	.08	.02	0.01(0.76)
- Matching (yes vs. no)	16	.39	.15	1.2(0.29)
- Random sequencing (high/unclear vs. low)	16	.05	.0003	0.17(0.69)
- Allocation concealment (high/unclear vs. low)	16	.22	.05	0.87(0.37)
- Blinding of participants & personnel (high/unclear vs. low) <sup>b</sup>	NA	NA	NA	NA
- Blinding of outcome assessors (high/unclear vs low)	16	.08	.007	0.43(0.66)
- Incomplete outcome data (high/unclear vs low)	16	.67	.45	14.4(0.002)*
- Selective reporting (Unclear vs low)	16	.39	.15	4.1(0.06)
- Participants physically inactive (high/unclear vs low)	16	.21	.04	0.75(0.40)
- Sample size estimates provided (no versus yes)	16	.56	.32	4.6(0.05)*
- Agreed to participate in study (%)	12	.47	.22	4.9(0.05)*
- Study funded (no versus yes)	16	.34	.12	15.9(0.001)*
- Type of analysis (abp vs itt) <sup>c</sup>	19	.21	.05	0.89(0.36)
- Test used (STAI and FIQ vs. AIMS) <sup>d,e</sup>	19	.41	.17	2.3(0.14)
Participant Characteristics				
- Exercise dropouts (%)	15	.34	.12	8.2(0.01)*
- Control dropouts (%)	13	.31	.10	1.3(0.27)
- Age (years)	14	.53	.28	11.9(.005)*
- Gender (mixed vs. females)	16	.14	.02	.38(0.54)
- AORD (rheumatoid/osteoarthritis vs. fibromyalgia)	16	.10	.01	.15(0.71)
- Rheumatic symptoms (years)	8	.37	.14	1.45(0.27)
- Years since diagnosis	4	.23	.05	.33(0.62)

## Exercise Intervention Characteristics

Exercise modality (aerobic/weight training vs. both)	16	.57	.32	8.19(0.01)*
Land vs. water-based exercise	16	.30	.09	1.03(0.33)
Length of training (weeks)	16	.16	.51	.44(0.52)
Frequency of training (times/week)	14	.02	.0004	.01(0.92)
Duration of training (min/session)	12	.43	.18	7.7(0.02)*
Compliance (% of exercise sessions attended)	8	.04	.001	.02(0.90)
Minutes of training per week	11	.61	.37	33.1(.0003)*
Minutes of training per week (adjusted for compliance)	7	.17	.03	.19(0.68)
Total minutes of training	11	.63	.40	15.0(0.004)*
Total minutes of training (adjusted for compliance)	7	.22	0.05	0.32(0.60)
Supervision status (unsupervised or supervised vs. both)	16	.49	0.24	4.20(0.04)*
Location of exercise (facility or home vs both)	16	.49	0.24	4.20(0.04)*
Participation (group or self vs. both)	16	.49	0.24	4.20(0.04)*
Adverse events (yes vs. no)	5	.23	.05	.17(0.71)

Notes: abp, analysis-by-protocol; itt, intention-to-treat; STAI, State-Trait Anxiety Inventory; FIQ, Fibromyalgia Impact Questionnaire; AIMS, Arthritis Impact Measurement Scale; <sup>a,</sup> Exposure, includes attention control, usual care and other types of exposure while no exposure, includes nonintervention and wait-list controls; <sup>b</sup>, NA, not applicable because all studies considered at high risk of bias given the inability to blind participants to exercise interventions; <sup>c,</sup> number of groups exceed 16 because two studies reported results for both abp and itt analysis; <sup>d,</sup> insufficient number of outcomes to include the DASS, HADS, MHI and VAS; <sup>e,</sup> number of groups exceed 16 because three studies reported anxiety results using two different instruments.

Author(s): What are the effects of exercise (aerobic, strength training, or both) on anxiety in adults with arthritis and other rheumatic diseases?

Date: July 3, 2017

Question: Exercise compared to control for reducing anxiety in adults with arthritis and other rheumatic diseases

Setting: Home, Facility, Both

Quality assessment								atients	Eff	ect	<b>.</b>	
№ of studies	Study design	Risk of bias	Inconsistency	Indirectness	Imprecision	Other considerations	exercise	control	Relative (95% CI)	Absolute (95% CI)	Quality	Importance
Anxiety (f	ollow up: mea	n 15.8 week	s; assessed with: \	/arious self-repo	rt instruments)							
14	randomized trials	not serious	not serious	notserious	not serious	publication bias strongly suspected all plausible residual confounding would reduce the demonstrated effect *	514	369	not estimable -	SMD 0.4 SD lower (0.65 lower to 0.15 lower)	⊕⊕⊕⊕ нgн	CRITICAL

CI: Confidence interval; SMD: Standardized mean difference

#### **Explanations**

a. Statistically significant small-study effects, suggesting the possibility of publication bias; possible confounding by year of publication, with the magnitude of effect over time smaller with more second studies.

176x131mm (300 x 300 DPI)

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43 44

45 46 47

# **PRISMA Checklist**

Section/topic	#	Checklist item	Reported on line #
TITLE			
Title	1	Identify the report as a systematic review, meta-analysis, or both.	1-3
ABSTRACT			
Structured summary	2	Provide a structured summary including, as applicable: background; objectives; data sources; study eligibility criteria, participants, and interventions; study appraisal and synthesis methods; results; limitations; conclusions and implications of key findings; systematic review registration number.	23-49
INTRODUCTION			
Rationale	3	Describe the rationale for the review in the context of what is already known.	62-103
Objectives	4	Provide an explicit statement of questions being addressed with reference to participants, interventions, comparisons, outcomes, and study design (PICOS).	104-107
METHODS			
Protocol and registration	5	Indicate if a review protocol exists, if and where it can be accessed (e.g., Web address), and, if available, provide registration information including registration number.	48-49; 112- 113; 714-718
Eligibility criteria	6	Specify study characteristics (e.g., PICOS, length of follow-up) and report characteristics (e.g., years considered, language, publication status) used as criteria for eligibility, giving rationale.	114-166
Information sources	7	Describe all information sources (e.g., databases with dates of coverage, contact with study authors to identify additional studies) in the search and date last searched.	167-175
Search	8	Present full electronic search strategy for at least one database, including any limits used, such that it could be repeated.	Supplementary file 1
Study selection	9	State the process for selecting studies (i.e., screening, eligibility, included in systematic review, and, if applicable, included in the meta-analysis).	182-202
Data collection process	10	Describe method of data extraction from reports (e.g., piloted forms, independently, in duplicate) and any processes for obtaining and confirming data from investigators.	203-217
Data items	11	List and define all variables for which data were sought (e.g., PICOS, funding sources) and any assumptions and simplifications made.	204-211; 218- 222
Risk of bias in individual studies	12	Describe methods used for assessing risk of bias of individual studies (including specification of whether this was done at the study or outcome level), and how this information is to be used in any data synthesis.	223-239
Summary measures	13	State the principal summary measures (e.g., risk ratio, difference in means).	241-255



# PRISMA Checklist

Synthesis of results	14	Describe the methods of handling data and combining results of studies, if done, including measures of consistency (e.g., $I^2$ ) for each meta-analysis.	256-283
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Page 1 of 2					
Section/topic	#	Checklist item	Reported on line #		
Risk of bias across studies	15	Specify any assessment of risk of bias that may affect the cumulative evidence (e.g., publication bias, selective reporting within studies).	321-326		
Additional analyses	16	Describe methods of additional analyses (e.g., sensitivity or subgroup analyses, meta-regression), if done, indicating which were pre-specified.	283-320; 327- 336		
RESULTS					
Study selection	17	Give numbers of studies screened, assessed for eligibility, and included in the review, with reasons for exclusions at each stage, ideally with a flow diagram.	346-357; Figure 1; Supplementary file 2		
Study characteristics	18	For each study, present characteristics for which data were extracted (e.g., study size, PICOS, follow-up period) and provide the citations.	358-422; Tables 1-3		
Risk of bias within studies	19	Present data on risk of bias of each study and, if available, any outcome level assessment (see item 12).	Supplementary file 3		
Results of individual studies	20	For all outcomes considered (benefits or harms), present, for each study: (a) simple summary data for each intervention group (b) effect estimates and confidence intervals, ideally with a forest plot.	Figure 3		
Synthesis of results	21	Present results of each meta-analysis done, including confidence intervals and measures of consistency.	Table 4; 432- 450; 473-587		
Risk of bias across studies	22	Present results of any assessment of risk of bias across studies (see Item 15).	423-430; Figure 2		
Additional analysis	23	Give results of additional analyses, if done (e.g., sensitivity or subgroup analyses, meta-regression [see Item 16]).	451-472		
DISCUSSION					
Summary of evidence	24	Summarize the main findings including the strength of evidence for each main outcome; consider their relevance to key groups (e.g., healthcare providers, users, and policy makers).	588-687		
Limitations	25	Discuss limitations at study and outcome level (e.g., risk of bias), and at review-level (e.g., incomplete retrieval of identified research, reporting bias).	688-701		
Conclusions	26	Provide a general interpretation of the results in the context of other evidence, and implications for future research.	702-705		

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## **PRISMA Checklist**

FUNDING			
Funding	27	Describe sources of funding for the systematic review and other support (e.g., supply of data); role of funders for the systematic review.	721-724

From: Moher D, Liberati A, Tetzlaff J, Altman DG, The PRISMA Group (2009). Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses: The PRISMA 10 Statement. PLoS Med 6(7): e1000097. doi:10.1371/journal.pmed1000097

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# **BMJ Open**

# Community-Deliverable Exercise and Anxiety in Adults with Arthritis and other Rheumatic Diseases: A Systematic Review with Meta-Analysis of Randomized Controlled Trials

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<b>Primary Subject Heading</b> :	Public health
Secondary Subject Heading:	Sports and exercise medicine, Evidence based practice
Keywords:	exercise, anxiety, arthritis, systematic review, meta-analysis

SCHOLARONE™ Manuscripts

- 1 Community-Deliverable Exercise and Anxiety in Adults with Arthritis and other
- 2 Rheumatic Diseases: A Systematic Review with Meta-Analysis of Randomized
- 3 Controlled Trials

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- **Keywords:** exercise, anxiety, arthritis, systematic review, meta-analysis.
- **Abstract:** 300 words
- 22 Introduction, Methods, Results, Conclusions: 8,632 words

Background/Purpose: Given conflicting findings, the purpose of this study was to use the meta-analytic approach to examine the effects of exercise (aerobic, strength training or both) on anxiety in adults with arthritis and other rheumatic diseases (AORD). **Methods:** Randomized controlled exercise intervention trials > 4 weeks in adults > 18 years of age with osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis or fibromyalgia were included. Studies were located by searching 8 electronic databases, cross-referencing and expert review. Dual selection and data abstraction of studies were performed. Hedge's standardized effect size (ES) was calculated for each result and pooled using the recently developed inverse-heterogeneity (IVhet) model. Two-tailed z-alpha values ≤ 0.05 and non-overlapping 95% confidence intervals (CI) were considered statistically significant. Heterogeneity was estimated using Q and  $l^2$  with alpha values < 0.10 for Q considered statistically significant. Small-study effects were examined using funnel plots and Egger's regression test. In addition, the number-needed-to-treat (NNT), percentile improvement and meta-regression were conducted. Results: Of the 639 citations screened, 14 studies representing 926 initially enrolled participants (539 exercise, 387 control) met the criteria for inclusion. Length of training averaged 15.8 + 6.7 weeks, frequency 3.3 + 1.3 times per week and duration 28.8 + 14.3 minutes per session. Overall, statistically significant in reductions in anxiety were found (exercise minus control changes ES = -0.40, 95% CI, -0.65, -0.15, tau<sup>2</sup> = 0.14; Q = 40.3, p = 0.0004;  $I^2$  = 62.8%). The NNT was 6 with a percentile improvement of 15.5% and an estimated 5.3 million inactive US adults with AORD improving their anxiety if they started exercising regularly. Statistically significant small-study effects were observed (p.

- 46 < 0.0001). Conclusions: Exercise is associated with reductions in anxiety among</p>
- adults with selected types of AORD. However, a need exists for additional, well-
- designed, randomized controlled trials on this topic. **Trial registration number:**
- 49 PROSPERO (CRD42016048728)



## STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

- To the best of the investigative team's knowledge, this is the first systematic review with meta-analysis to examine the effects of exercise on anxiety as a primary outcome in adults with AORD.
- The use of the recently developed IVhet model appears to provide more robust estimates than those derived from other models.
- Common to all aggregate data meta-analyses, the possibility of ecological fallacy
   exists and the meta-regression analyses conducted do not allow for causal inferences.
- Given that no adjustments for multiple testing were made because of concerns about missing possibly important findings that could be tested in original trials, the possibility of chance findings exist.

## INTRODUCTION

Rationale

Arthritis and other rheumatic diseases (AORD) are major public health problems in the United States (US). Based on combined 2013-2015 data from the National Health Interview Survey, the annual prevalence of doctor-diagnosed arthritis in the civilian, non-institutionalized US population aged 18 years or older was 22.7% (54.4 million), with prevalence higher among women (23.5%) than men (18.1%). By 2040, it is estimated that 78.4 million (25.9%) US adults 18 years of age and older will have doctor-diagnosed arthritis.<sup>2</sup> Compared to combined 2013-2015 data,<sup>1</sup> this represents an increase of approximately 24 million adults. Not surprisingly, the financial costs associated with AORD in the United States are high. In 2003, the total costs attributable to AORD were estimated to be approximately \$128 billion, \$80.8 billion in direct costs (medical expenditures) and \$47 billion in indirect costs (lost earnings).<sup>3</sup> This represents an increase of 24% between 1997 and 2003 and was primarily the result of an increase in the number of people with AORD.<sup>3</sup> Elevated and sustained levels of anxiety can result in a number of deleterious consequences. These include, but are not limited to, (1) an increased risk for coronary heart disease as a result of heightened arousal leading to an increased risk for hypertension and a pro-inflammatory state, 4-6 (2) an increased risk for cardiac death, 5 and (3) poorer health-related quality-of-life. While it is well-recognized that depression is a common comorbidity among adults with AORD, recent research suggests that the prevalence of anxiety among US adults with arthritis is approximately twice as high as depression.8 Using data from the Arthritis Conditions Health Effects Survey, the

prevalence of anxiety and depression among US adults with doctor-diagnosed arthritis was estimated to be almost twice as high for anxiety (30.5%) versus depression (17.5%), with US population estimates of 11.5 million for anxiety and 6.6 million for depression.<sup>8</sup> In addition, an 18-country study found the prevalence of anxiety to be greater in adults with AORD versus those without AORD.<sup>9</sup> This included, separately, generalized anxiety disorder, social phobia, agoraphobia/panic disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder.<sup>9</sup> Given the prevalence of anxiety, it has been recommended that health care providers screen people with AORD for anxiety.<sup>8</sup>

Exercise is an intervention that is generally safe and appropriate for most persons with various types of AORD. 10 11 While there is no firm consensus regarding the mechanisms associated with the anxiolytic effects of exercise in adults with AORD as well as other chronic diseases, a recent review on this topic has reported several potential mechanisms, exclusive of specific chronic disease status, that may be responsible for such. 12 These include physiological (decrease in sympathetic nervous system and hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis reactivity) as well as psychological (improvements in anxiety sensitivity, self-efficacy, and distraction) processes. 12

interventions reduce depressive symptoms in adults, with an estimated 3.1 million inactive US adults with AORD improving their depressive symptoms if they began and maintained a regular exercise program. However, the effects of community-deliverable exercise on anxiety as a primary outcome are not known given a plethora of conflicting randomized controlled trials on this topic as well as a lack of studies that assess both depression and anxiety within the same study (only 44.8% based on a

Recent meta-analytic work has shown that community-deliverable exercise

previous meta-analysis).<sup>13</sup> Most importantly, a recent systematic review of previous meta-analyses, not to be confused with an original systematic review with meta-analyses, found that no meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials has examined the effects of community-deliverable exercise on anxiety as a primary outcome in adults with AORD.<sup>14</sup> Community-deliverable exercise may be especially important given its potential convenience, ability to reach a large amount of people, and cost.<sup>15-18</sup> In addition, a systematic review found that greater levels of anxiety were a barrier to exercise adherence in those with AORD.<sup>19</sup> Thus, reductions in anxiety may increase adherence to exercise in adults with AORD, a population in which meeting current exercise guidelines is significantly lower than in those without AORD, approximately 40% versus 50%.<sup>20</sup> Clearly, it is critically important to develop a better understanding of the overall magnitude of effect, as well as factors associated with, exercise for improving anxiety in adults with AORD.

### **Objective**

The primary objective of this study was to conduct a systematic review with an aggregate data meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials to determine the effects of community-deliverable exercise interventions on anxiety in adults with AORD.

#### **METHODS**

#### Overview

This study followed the guidelines from the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) statement for meta-analyses of health care interventions.<sup>21</sup> The protocol for this study is registered in PROSPERO (trial registration number CRD42016048728) and has been previously published in BMJ Open.<sup>22</sup>

# Eligibility criteria

Studies that met the following criteria were included: (1) randomized controlled trials with the unit of assignment at the participant level, (2) community-deliverable exercise-only intervention group (aerobic, strength training, or both), (3) interventions > 4 weeks, (4) comparative control group (non-intervention, wait-list control, usual care, attention control), (5) adults > 18 years of age with doctor-diagnosed osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis or fibromyalgia, (6) studies (published and unpublished in the form of Master's theses and dissertations) in any language. assuming an English-language abstract was available, from January 1, 1981 forward, and (7) data for anxiety, as defined by the authors of the original studies. Studies were limited to those with osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis or fibromyalgia based on previous meta-analytic research showing a lack of exercise intervention studies for other types of AORD. 13 Studies were limited to randomized trials because it is the only way to control for confounders that are not known or measured as well as the observation that nonrandomized controlled trials tend to overestimate the effects of healthcare interventions. <sup>23 24</sup> Aerobic and progressive resistance (strength training) exercise were defined according to section C2 of the 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee Report.<sup>25</sup> Specifically, aerobic exercise is defined as any 'exercise that primarily uses the aerobic energy-producing systems, can improve the capacity and efficiency of these systems, and is effective for improving cardiorespiratory endurance, while strength training is defined as 'exercise training primarily designed to increase skeletal muscle strength, power, endurance, and mass'.25

For this proposed project, community-deliverable exercise interventions were considered to be those that could be performed, or have the potential to be adapted and performed, by persons in a community setting (recreation or senior centers, in the home or neighborhood, etc.) and meet the implementation guidelines for physical activity interventions recently recommended by the Arthritis Program at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: (1) no academic degree required for a leader/implementer but leader training available, if needed, (2) no special facilities beyond a community room (except a warm pool for aquatic exercise). (3) inexpensive equipment, (4) cost to participants less than \$50.00, (5) implementation guide available, (6) supporting structures judged to be adequate to support widespread implementation.<sup>26</sup> An exercise duration of at least 4 weeks was chosen based on previous research in which statistically significant improvements in anxiety occurred as a result of as little as 4 weeks of exercise training.<sup>27</sup> There was no maximum limit on the length of any interventions for the studies included in our proposed project. We limited our studies to adults ages 18 and older because the inclusion of children and adolescents pose additional confounding problems congruent with the many developmental changes that occur during this period. In addition, the prevalence of AORD is more common in adults than children and adolescents. We restricted our studies to published articles, dissertations and master's theses and examined for potential small-study effects such as publication bias when limited to published articles in peer-reviewed journals. The year 1981 was chosen as the starting point for eligibility based on a preliminary PubMed search in which it was found that this was the first year that a randomized controlled trial on exercise and arthritis was

published.<sup>28</sup> Studies from both English and non-English-language sources were included with the latter translated into English by the second author using the freely available web-based Babelfish and Bing translators. Finally, while acknowledging that the mechanisms for changes in anxiety may differ for different types of AORD, for example fibromyalgia versus osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis, all three were included in the current systematic review with meta-analysis because the focus was on determining whether exercise reduces anxiety in adults with AORD, not why it reduces anxiety. In addition, community-deliverable exercise programs, and exercise programs in general, are not traditionally focused on one type of AORD, but rather, across all types of AORD.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, meta-regression (see Data Synthesis) was conducted to examine for any potential associations between type of AORD and changes in anxiety. Finally, there has been recent criticism by others regarding the publication of systematic reviews with meta-analysis using the "least publishable unit" approach.<sup>29</sup>

#### Information sources

Eight electronic databases were searched for potentially eligible studies in any language published from January 1, 1981 forward. The last searches were conducted on January 6, 2017. Databases searched included (1) PubMed, (2) SPORTDiscus, (3) Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Clinical Trials (CENTRAL), (4) Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL), (5) PsycINFO, (6) Web of Science, (7) Scopus and (8) ProQuest (Master's theses and dissertations). In addition, cross-referencing from retrieved studies was conducted. Furthermore, the third author, an expert on physical activity and AORD, reviewed the reference list for completeness.

### Search strategy

Search strategies were developed using text words as well as medical subject headings (MeSH) associated with the effects of exercise on anxiety in adults with AORD. The second author conducted all electronic database searches. A copy of the search strategy for one of the databases searched (PubMed) is shown in Supplementary file 1.

### Study records

Study selection

All studies to potentially be screened were imported into EndNote (EndNote, Version X8. New York, NY: Thomson Reuters, 2016). Duplicates were then removed both electronically and manually by the second author. A copy of the database was then provided to the first author for duplicate screening. The first two authors selected all studies, independent of each other. The full report for each article was obtained for all titles and abstracts that appeared to meet the inclusion criteria or where there was any uncertainty. Multiple reports of the same study were handled by including the most recently published article as well as drawing from previous reports, assuming similar methods and sample sizes. Neither of the screeners were blinded to the journal titles or to the study authors or institutions. Reasons for exclusion were coded as one or more of the following: (1) inappropriate population, (2) inappropriate intervention, (3) inappropriate comparison(s), (4) inappropriate outcome(s), (5) inappropriate study design, (6) other. Upon completion, the first two authors met and reviewed their selections. Discrepancies were resolved by consensus. If consensus could not be reached, the third author provided a recommendation. Using Cohen's kappa statistic  $(\kappa)$ , 30 the overall agreement rate prior to correcting disagreements was 0.90. After

identifying the final number of studies to be included, the overall precision of the searches was calculated by dividing the number of studies included by the total number of studies screened after removing duplicates.<sup>31</sup> The number needed-to-read (NNR) was then calculated as the inverse of the precision.<sup>31</sup>

Data abstraction

Prior to the abstraction of data, a codebook that could hold more than 200 items per study was developed using Microsoft Excel (Microsoft Excel, Version 2010, Redmond, WA). The codebook was developed by the first two authors with input from the third author. The major categories of variables coded included (1) study characteristics (author, journal, year, etc.), (2) participant characteristics (age, height, body weight, etc.), (3) intervention characteristics (type, length, frequency, intensity, duration, compliance, etc.), and (4) outcome characteristics for anxiety (sample sizes, baseline and post-exercise means and standard deviations, etc.). The first two authors abstracted data from all studies, independent of each other, using separate codebooks in Microsoft Excel. Upon completion of coding, the codebooks were merged into one primary codebook for review. Both authors then met and reviewed every item for agreement. Discrepancies were resolved by consensus. If consensus could not be reached, the third author provided a recommendation. Using Cohen's kappa statistic (κ),<sup>30</sup> the overall agreement rate prior to correcting disagreements was 0.95.

#### **Outcomes and prioritization**

The primary outcome in this study was changes in anxiety. Secondary outcomes included changes in physical function, pain, depression, quality of life, body mass index

(BMI in kg·m<sup>-2</sup>), maximum oxygen consumption (VO2<sub>max</sub> in ml·kg<sup>-1</sup>·min<sup>-1</sup>), and muscular strength.

#### Risk of bias assessment in individual studies

Risk of bias was assessed at the study level using the Cochrane Risk of Bias instrument,<sup>32</sup> with a focus on the primary outcome of interest, changes in anxiety. Bias was evaluated across six domains: (1) random sequence generation, (2) allocation concealment, (3) blinding of participants and personnel, (4) blinding of outcome assessment, (5) incomplete outcome data, (6) selective reporting and (7) whether participants were exercising regularly, as defined by the original study authors, prior to taking part in the study. Each item was classified as having either a high, low, or unclear risk of bias. Because it's virtually impossible to blind participants to group assignment in exercise intervention protocols, all studies were classified as high risk with respect to the category "blinding of participants and personnel". Based on previous research, no study was excluded based on the results of the risk of bias assessment.<sup>33</sup> The first two authors conducted all assessments, independent of each other. Both authors then met and reviewed all selections for agreement. Discrepancies were resolved by consensus, and if necessary, consultation with the third author. Using Cohen's kappa statistic (κ), 30 the overall agreement rate for risk of bias assessment prior to correcting disagreements was 0.71.

### **Data Synthesis**

# Calculation of effect sizes

The primary outcome for this proposed project was changes in anxiety, calculated as Hedge's standardized mean difference effect size (ES), adjusted for small-sample

bias.<sup>34</sup> This was calculated by subtracting the change outcome difference in the exercise group minus the change outcome difference in the control group, and then dividing by the pooled standard deviation of the change outcome for the exercise and control groups. If change score standard deviations were not available, they were calculated from reported change outcomes, treatment effect 95% confidence intervals (CI), or pre and post standard deviation values according to procedures developed by Follmann et al.<sup>35</sup> Secondary outcomes (physical function, pain, quality of life, depression, muscular strength) were calculated using the same procedures as for the primary outcome while BMI and VO2<sub>max</sub> were calculated using the original metric. For studies in which outcomes were assessed at multiple time points, differences between baseline values and the final time point closest to cessation of the exercise intervention were used.

# Pooled estimates for changes in outcomes

Effect size changes in anxiety and all secondary outcomes were pooled using the recently developed inverse heterogeneity (IVhet) model.<sup>36</sup> The IVhet model is a quasi-likelihood model that is computed by (1) calculating weights that sum to 1 from each study, (2) pooling effects from all the studies, and (3) calculating the variance of the pooled ES. The IVhet model has been shown to be superior to the original random-effects, method-of-moments model of Dersimonian and Laird,<sup>37</sup> the most common random-effects model used to pool aggregate data meta-analytic results.<sup>38</sup> Specifically, simulation studies have shown that the IVhet model retains correct coverage probabilities as well as a lower observed variance than the random-effects

model, regardless of heterogeneity.<sup>36</sup> Two-tailed z-alpha values < 0.05 and nonoverlapping 95% confidence intervals were considered statistically significant. Heterogeneity and inconsistency for each pooled outcome were estimated using the  $Q^{39}$  and  $I^2$  statistic, 40 respectively. An alpha level of  $\leq 0.10$  for Q was considered to represent statistically significant heterogeneity while inconsistency was categorized as very low (<25%), low (25% to <50%), moderate (50% to <75%) or large (> 75%). 40 To improve practical relevance with respect to potential improvements in anxiety and all secondary outcomes, percentile gain in the exercise groups was calculated using Cohen's U<sub>3</sub> index<sup>41</sup> In addition, the number-needed-to treat (NNT) was estimated using the approach suggested by the Cochrane Collaboration<sup>32</sup> and a control group risk of 30% based on previous research on anxiolytics. 42 This was accomplished by converting the standardized mean differences into a log odds ratio, odds ratio, assumed control risk (30%) and then NNT. Extending the NNT, estimates of the number of US adults with AORD who could improve their anxiety levels but were not currently meeting physical activity recommendations were calculated. These were based on the reciprocal of the NNT multiplied by the number of adults in the United States with doctordiagnosed arthritis who were not currently meeting exercise guidelines, currently approximately 31.6 million. 143 Influence analysis was conducted with each study deleted from the model once while *cumulative meta-analysis*, ranked by year, was used to examine the accumulation of results over time. The primary pooling of results was based on group level findings. However, findings were also examined by collapsing results so that only one ES represented each study. In addition, for those outcomes that were assessed using multiple instruments, results

from these instruments were pooled into one ES. The rationale for this was based on the lack of consensus regarding the most valid and reliable instrument for the outcome and population of interest as well as the need to maintain as much independence as possible. For those studies that reported both per protocol and intention-to-treat analyses, results were also pooled into one ES.

Exploratory meta-regression based on the IVhet model was used to examine the relationship between changes in our primary outcome (anxiety) and selected covariates.<sup>36</sup> This was accomplished by (1) conducting simple meta-regression for statistically significant associations between selected covariates and changes in anxiety, (2) examining for multicollinearity between covariates (r > 0.80), and (3) building a multiple meta-regression model. These models used a multiplicative versus additive component for residual heterogeneity. To achieve matching error variances, robust Huber-Ecker-White-sandwich error variances were used to account for the underestimated dispersion. Such errors were expected to calculate the correct standard errors for heterogeneous data that are traditionally heteroskedastic. Because of the small sample size, a post hoc decision was made to include no more than three potential predictors based on simple regression analyses. Multivariate imputation using chained equations (MICE)<sup>44</sup> was used to impute missing values for minutes of training per week (5 imputations) and changes in depression (1 imputation) so that the maximum sample size could be achieved. Because of the small sample size, a post hoc decision was made to conduct meta-regression with results for osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis combined.

Based on the recommendations of Rothman,<sup>45</sup> no adjustments for multiple testing were made because of concerns about missing possibly important findings that could be pursued in future randomized controlled trials. While this could be viewed as a 'fishing expedition', such analyses are important for providing investigators with potential direction for future randomized controlled trials, one of the very reasons for conducting a systematic review with meta-analysis.<sup>46</sup> This approach is especially appropriate for meta-analysis since covariates are not randomly assigned in meta-analysis and thus, such analyses are considered to be observational in nature.<sup>47</sup> As a result, causal inferences cannot be derived from meta-regression. However, any observed associations can provide direction for future research.

### **Meta-biases**

*Small-study-effects* (publication bias, etc.) for primary and secondary outcomes were assessed following current guidelines. This included qualitative analysis using funnel plots as well as quantitative analysis using Egger's regression-intercept test for continuous data. An alpha level  $\leq 0.05$  and 95% CI that did not include zero (0) was considered to represent statistically significant small-study effects.

#### Confidence in cumulative evidence

Strength of findings for our primary outcome (anxiety) was evaluated using the Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development and Evaluation (GRADE) for meta-analysis. The quality of evidence was assessed across the domains of risk of bias, consistency, directness, precision and publication bias. Quality was judged as high (further research is very unlikely to change our confidence in the estimate of effect), moderate (further research is likely to have an important impact on our confidence in the

estimate of effect and may change the estimate), low (further research is very likely to have an important impact on our confidence in the estimate of effect and is likely to change the estimate), or very low (very uncertain about the estimate of effect).

### Software used for data synthesis

- All data were analyzed using Stata (V.14.1; Stata/SE for Windows (Version 14.1).
- College Station, Texas: Stata Corporation LP, 2015), Microsoft Excel 2010 (Microsoft
- Excel (Version 2010)), and three add-ins for Excel, Meta XL (V.5.3; Meta XL (Version)
- 5.3). 2016), SSC-Stat (V.2.18; SSC-Stat (Version 2.18). University of Reading, UK:
- Statistical Services Center, 2007), and EZ-Analyze (V.3.0; EZ Analyze (Version 3.0).
- Boston, MA: Tim Poynton, 2007).

### **RESULTS**

# **Study Characteristics**

A flow diagram that depicts the search process for study selection is shown in Figure 1. After initially identifying 639 citations and removing 240 duplicates both electronically and manually, 399 citations were screened. Of these, 14 studies representing 30 groups (16 exercise, 14 control) and 926 initially enrolled participants (539 exercise, 387 control) met the criteria for inclusion. Two studies included more than one intervention group. One included a pool and walking group while the other included a long and short bout exercise group. The major reasons for exclusion were (1) inappropriate intervention (47.8%), (2) inappropriate study design (32.2%), (3) inappropriate population (11.9%), (4) inappropriate comparison group (4.7%), and (5)

inappropriate outcome (3.4%). The precision of the search, excluding duplicates, was

3.5% while the NNR was 29. A list of excluded studies, including the reasons for

exclusion, can be found in Supplementary File 2. With respect to source, 1 study (7.1%) was published as a dissertation<sup>51</sup> while the remaining 13 (92.9%) were published in peer-reviewed journals. <sup>50 52-63</sup> For the 12 studies (85.7%) in which data were available, the 5-year impact factor of the journals in which studies were published ranged from 1.7 to 7.9 ( $\overline{\times}$  + SD, 4.1 + 2.4, median = 2.9). Five studies (35.7%) were published in the United States, 51 52 56-58 2 each in either Canada, <sup>55</sup> <sup>61</sup> Portugal <sup>62</sup> <sup>63</sup> or Spain, <sup>59</sup> <sup>60</sup> and 1 each in either Australia, <sup>53</sup> Brazil, <sup>50</sup> or Ireland. 54 Thirteen of the 14 studies (92.9%) were published in English-language journals<sup>50-62</sup> while 1 (7.1%) was published in Spanish.<sup>63</sup> With respect to types of control groups, 4 studies used either a wait-list control 50 51 53 54 or what appeared to be some type of attention control group, 52 56 58 61 while three each used either a non-intervention 55 <sup>57</sup> 62 or usual care group. <sup>59</sup> 60 63 Three studies (21.4%) reported using matching procedures according to either sex, 55 age, sex and BMI, 56 or type of arthritis (rheumatoid or osteoarthritis).<sup>58</sup> None of the studies reported using any type of crossover design. 50-63 For data analysis, 7 studies (50.0%) reported using the perprotocol approach, 51 56-58 60 62 63 4 (28.6%) used intention-to-treat, 50 52-54 while the remaining 3 (21.4%) used both. 55 59 61 Eight studies (57.1%) provided sample size estimates. 50 52-54 56 60 61 63 With respect to funding, 12 studies (85.7%), reported receiving

### **Participant Characteristics**

A description of the physical characteristics of participants for those studies that reported data is shown in Tables 1 and 2. On average, participants were overweight

funding from government, university, or private sources for their work. 50 52-62

and had low cardiorespiratory fitness. The majority of participants were women.

although 7 studies (50.0%) also included a small number of men. 52-58 Nine studies (64.3%) were limited to participants with fibromyalgia. 50 51 55 56 59-63 3 (21.4%) with osteoarthritis, 52-54 1 with rheumatoid arthritis 57 and 1 with either rheumatoid arthritis or osteoarthritis.<sup>58</sup> For those studies in which data were available, the number of years in which rheumatic symptoms were present ranged from 3 to 24 ( $\overline{\times}$  + SD, 13.1 + 7.0, median = 12.0),  $^{54-56}$   $^{59}$   $^{61-63}$  while years since diagnosis ranged from 3 to 7 ( $\overline{\times}$  + SD, 4.1 + 2.0, median = 3). <sup>55 61-63</sup> Nine of the 14 studies (64.3%) reported that one or more participants were taking some type of medication for their condition. 51 53-55 57-59 62 63 These included, but were not necessarily limited to, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS), analgesics, narcotics and non-narcotics for pain, muscle relaxants, antidepressants, and anxiolytics. However, a lack of specific data was available on exposure to medications both before and during the study, including any changes during the intervention period. In addition, a lack of data was available on pharmacologic equivalence between study arms both before and during the study. For cigarette smoking, one study reported cigarette smoking in some of the participants.<sup>61</sup> Participant withdrawals or removal in the exercise groups ranged from 0% to 50% ( $\overline{\times}$  + SD, 17.4 + 13.4, median = 17.0) while withdrawals or removal in the control groups ranged from 0% to 41% ( $\overline{\times}$  + SD, 11.5 + 12.7, median = 6.3). Reasons for withdrawals or removal included such things as family issues, pain from exercising, injuries, personal issues, time, unhappiness with group assignment, transportation issues, moving, employment commitments, boredom with exercise routine, not enough room or privacy to perform exercise, failure to complete lab assessments, not attending a

specific percentage of the exercise sessions, or changing medications that could affect mood.

#### **Exercise Intervention Characteristics**

Exercise intervention characteristics for each group from each study are shown in Tables 1 and 3. Intensity of training, categorized according to American College of Sports Medicine<sup>64</sup> and limited to aerobic exercise only, included very light, light, moderate and vigorous exercise for the 9 (64.3%) studies that reported such information. <sup>51 55 56 58-63</sup> For mode of training, 6 studies (42.9%) focused on aerobic types of exercise, 50 51 55 58 60 61 1 (7.1%) on weight training, 57 and 7 (50.0%) on both. 52-54 56 59 62 <sup>63</sup> Specific types of aerobic activities included such things as aquatic exercise, walking, jogging, exercising to music and cycling. For the few studies that provided detailed information on resistance training, the number of sets ranged from 1 to 3. 57 59 the number of repetitions from 8 to 15,5759 and the number of exercises from 2 to 10 or more. <sup>56</sup> <sup>57</sup> <sup>59</sup> One study reported a rest period for 30 seconds between sets. <sup>57</sup> For those studies that reported data, the equipment used for resistance training included free weights and elastic bands. 52 56 57 62 63 Seven studies (50.0%) reported supervised exercise. 55 56 58-60 62 63 5 (35.7%) reported both supervised and unsupervised exercise. 50-<sup>54</sup> while the remaining 2 (14.3%) reported unsupervised exercise. <sup>57 61</sup> Three of the 14 studies (21.4%) reported some type of adverse event. 51 52 61 Reasons included 1 participant dropping out due to pain after the first exercise session. 51 2 participants because of a history of a herniated disk and low back and leg pain, 52 and 1 participant because of a metatarsal fracture. 61 Another study reported that 1 participant withdrew because of the exacerbation of back pain<sup>53</sup> while a final study reported the exclusion of

2 participants because of severe coronary artery disease.<sup>57</sup> None of the studies provided data on the costs associated with conducting the intervention.<sup>50-63</sup>

#### **Risk of Bias Assessment**

Results for risk of bias assessment using the Cochrane Risk of Bias Assessment Instrument are shown in Figure 2 and Supplementary file 3. As can be seen, greater than 50% of the studies were at an unclear or high risk of bias with respect to (1) incomplete outcome reporting (78.6%), (2) allocation concealment (78.6%), and (3) blinding of outcome assessors (57.1%). Given the inability to truly blind participants in exercise intervention trials, all studies (100%) were considered to be at a high risk of bias for the category 'blinding of participants and personnel'.

### **Data Synthesis**

Overall results for primary outcome (anxiety). Overall results for changes in anxiety for the 14 included studies  $^{50-63}$  are shown in Table 4 and Figure 3. As can be seen, statistically significant (p = 0.002) reductions in anxiety were observed. In addition, statistically significant heterogeneity was observed while overall inconsistency was categorized as moderate, (range = low to large). The NNT was 6 with a percentile improvement of 15.5% and an estimated 5.3 million inactive US adults with AORD improving their anxiety if they started exercising regularly. Statistically significant small-study effects were observed (p < 0.0001) (Figure 4). With each result deleted from the model once, results remained statistically significant across all deletions, ranging from - 0.44 (95% Cl, -0.71 to -0.18) to -0.35 (-0.57 to -0.12). Cumulative meta-analysis, ranked by year, demonstrated that results have been statistically significant since the first study was conducted in 1989.  $^{58}$  but with a trend towards smaller improvements in anxiety with

each accumulating year (Figure 5). Reductions in anxiety were similar to group-level results when collapsed so that only one ES represented each study (ES, -0.40, 95% CI, -0.67 to -0.13, p = 0.004; Q = 39.6, p = 0.0002;  $I^2$  = 67.2%, 95% CI, 42.6% to 81.3%,  $tau^2 = 0.15$ ). With six outliers deleted from the model, overall reductions in anxiety were similar but heterogeneity was no longer statistically significant and overall inconsistency was reduced to a level categorized as small (ES, -0.40, 95% CI, -0.62 to -0.18, p = 0.0004; Q = 11.8, p = 0.22;  $I^2$  = 24.0%, 95% CI, 0% to 63.1%, tau<sup>2</sup> = 0.03). Meta-regression results for anxiety. Simple meta-regression results are shown in Supplementary File 4. For study characteristics, greater reductions in anxiety were associated with (1) earlier publication year, (2) studies at an unclear versus low risk of bias, (3) studies in which sample size estimates were not provided, (4) trials in which a larger percentage of participants initially agreed to participate in, and (5) studies that were not funded versus funded. For participant characteristics, greater improvements were associated with a larger percent dropout in the exercise groups as well as younger age. For exercise intervention characteristics, greater reductions were associated with (1) aerobic/strength training versus aerobic and strength training combined, (2) fewer minutes of exercise per session, (3) minutes of exercise per week, and (4) total minutes of exercise for the entire intervention period. Greater reductions were also associated with (1) supervised and unsupervised exercise versus both, (2) facility and home-based exercise versus both and (3) group and self-exercise versus both. No statistically significant association (p = 0.71) was observed between rheumatoid/osteoarthritis (ES = -0.35) and fibromyalgia (ES = -0.44) while the overall ES for those studies in which the

participants had rheumatoid arthritis was -0.54 and the overall ES for those in which the majority had osteoarthritis was -0.32.

Results for the final multiple regression model are shown in Table 5. The overall model was statistically significant (F = 13.4, p = 0.004). Earlier year of publication and decreases in depression were statistically significant predictors for greater reductions in anxiety. However, minutes of exercise per week was no longer statistically significant. **GRADE findings for changes in anxiety.** An evidence profile for changes in anxiety is shown in Supplementary file 5. As can be seen, the outcome (anxiety) was considered critical and the overall strength of the finding was considered high, with future additional studies unlikely to have an effect on the overall direction of findings. **Results for secondary outcomes.** Overall results for changes in secondary outcomes are shown in Table 4. Physical function was assessed in 10 studies 50 52-55 57 58 61-63 using the 10 meter walk test, 50 foot walk, 6 minute walk, Arthritis Impact and Measurement Scale (AIMS), Fibromyalgia Impact Questionnaire (FIQ), Short Physical Performance Battery, sit-to-stand test, stairclimbing test, up and go test, and the Western Ontario and McMaster Osteoarthritis Index (WOMAC). As can be seen, statistically significant (p < 0.001) improvements in physical function were observed. Statistically significant heterogeneity was observed while inconsistency was categorized as moderate, (range = low to large). The NNT was 4 with a percentile improvement of 24.5% and an estimated 9 million inactive US adults with AORD improving their physical function if they started exercising regularly. No statistically significant small-study effects were observed (p = 0.17). With each result deleted from the model once, results remained statistically

significant across all deletions, ranging from 0.54 (95% CI, 0.30 to 0.78) to 0.73 (95%

CI, 0.39 to 1.06). Cumulative meta-analysis, ranked by year, demonstrated that results have been statistically significant since the first study was conducted in 1989.<sup>58</sup> but with a trend towards smaller improvements in physical function with each accumulating year (from 0.86 in 1989 to 0.66 in 2016). Improvements in physical function were similar to group-level results when collapsed so that only one ES represented each study (ES, 0.66, 95% CI, 0.31 to 1.01, p = 0.0002; Q = 35.6, p < 0.001;  $I^2$  = 74.7%, 95% CI, 52.8% to 86.5%,  $tau^2 = 0.21$ ). With four outliers deleted from the model, overall improvements in physical function were statistically significant but slightly smaller, heterogeneity was no longer statistically significant, and overall inconsistency was reduced to a level categorized as very low (ES, 0.57, 95% CI, 0.36 to 0.78, p <0.001; Q = 7.2, p =0.41;  $I^2$  = 2.7%, 95% CI, 0% to 68.5%,  $tau^2 = 0.003$ ). For pain, assessment was conducted in 13 studies<sup>50-54 56-63</sup> using the AIMS, FIQ, numerical rating scale, tender point count, visual analog scale and the WOMAC. As can be seen in Table 4, statistically significant (p = 0.017) decreases in pain were found. Statistically significant heterogeneity was observed while inconsistency was categorized as large, including both CIs. The NNT was 6 with a percentile improvement of 23.1% and an estimated 5.6 million inactive US adults with AORD decreasing their pain if they started exercising regularly. No statistically significant small-study effects were observed (p = 0.34). With each result deleted from the model once, results remained statistically significant across all deletions, ranging from -0.70 (95% CI, -1.21 to -0.19) to -0.47 (95% CI, -0.80 to -0.15). Cumulative meta-analysis, ranked by year, demonstrated that results have been statistically significant, and remained statistically significant, since only 2013. Decreases in pain were similar to group-level results when collapsed

so that only one ES represented each study (ES, -0.62, 95% CI, -1.16 to -0.07, p = 0.03; = 123.7, p <0.001;  $I^2$  = 90.3%, 95% CI, 85.3% to 93.6%, tau<sup>2</sup> = 0.75). With ten outliers deleted from the model, decreases in pain remained statistically significant but smaller, heterogeneity was no longer statistically significant, and overall inconsistency was reduced to a level categorized as very low (ES, -0.44, 95% CI, -0.70 to -0.18, p = 0.001; Q = 1.5, p = 0.68;  $I^2$  = 0%, 95% CI, 0% to 69.5%, tau<sup>2</sup> = 0). Depression was assessed in 13 studies 50-58 60-63 using the AIMS, Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D), Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS21), FIQ, HADS, MHI, and VAS. As can be seen in Table 4, statistically significant (p = 0.009) decreases in depression were found. Statistically significant heterogeneity was observed while inconsistency was categorized as moderate (95% CI = low to large). The NNT was 6 with a percentile improvement of 15% and an estimated 5.1 million inactive US adults with AORD reducing their depression if they started exercising regularly. Small-study effects were not statistically significant (p = 0.08). With each result deleted from the model once, results remained statistically significant across all deletions, ranging from -0.52 (95% CI, -0.68 to -0.37) to -0.32 (95% CI, -0.61 to -0.0.3). Cumulative meta-analysis, ranked by year, demonstrated that improvements have been statistically significant and remained stable since 2013. Decreases in depression were similar to group-level results when collapsed so that only one ES represented each study (ES, -0.38, 95% CI, -0.70 to -0.07, p = 0.02; Q = 45.6, p < 0.001;  $I^2$  = 73.7%, 95% CI, 54.3% to 84.8%, tau<sup>2</sup> = 0.21). With three outliers deleted from the model, improvements in depression remained

statistically significant, slightly larger, but with non-significant heterogeneity and overall

inconsistency categorized as very low (ES, -0.43, 95% CI, -0.60 to -0.26, p < 0.001; Q = 5.7, p =0.89;  $I^2$  = 0%, 95% CI, 0% to 19.3%, tau<sup>2</sup> = 0). Quality-of-life was assessed in 12 studies 50-57 59 61-63 using the FIQ, Health Assessment Questionnaire (HAQ), Quality of Life Scale (QOLS), SF-12, and SF-36. As shown in Table 4, statistically significant (p < 0.0001) improvements in quality-of-life were found. Statistically significant heterogeneity was observed while inconsistency was categorized as large (95% CI = low to large). The NNT was 4 with a percentile improvement of 23.1% and an estimated 8.6 million inactive US adults with AORD improving their quality-of-life if they started exercising regularly. Statistically significant small-study effects were observed (p < 0.001). With each result deleted from the model once, results remained statistically significant across all deletions, ranging from 0.58 (95% CI, 0.35 to 0.81) to 0.70 (95% CI, 0.41 to 0.99). Cumulative meta-analysis, ranked by year. demonstrated that improvements have been statistically significant since 2001, but with a trend towards a decrease in the magnitude of effect. Increases in quality-of-life were similar to group-level results when collapsed so that only one ES represented each study (ES, 0.63, 95% CI, 0.34 to 0.92, p < 0.001; Q = 30.9, p = 0.001;  $I^2$  = 64.3%, 95% CI, 33.9% to 80.8%,  $tau^2 = 0.14$ ). With four outliers deleted from the model, improvements in quality-of-life remained statistically significant, similar in magnitude, but with non-significant heterogeneity and overall inconsistency categorized as low (ES, 0.64, 95% CI, 0.39 to 0.90, p < 0.001; Q = 11.4, p = 0.18;  $I^2$  = 29.8%, 95% CI, 0% to 67.5%, tau<sup>2</sup> = 0.04). Maximum oxygen consumption (VO2<sub>max</sub> in ml·kg<sup>-1</sup> min<sup>-1</sup>) was assessed in 5 studies<sup>56-58</sup> 61 62 using various maximal treadmill tests while one study used a submaximal step test

(Canadian Aerobic Fitness Test). As can be seen in Table 4, statistically significant (p =

0.001) improvements in VO2<sub>max</sub> were observed. Statistically significant heterogeneity was observed while inconsistency was categorized as moderate (95% CI = low to large). The NNT was 3 with a percentile improvement of 25.7% and an estimated 9.5 million inactive US adults with AORD improving their relative VO2<sub>max</sub> if they started exercising regularly. No statistically significant small-study effects were observed (p = 0.18). With each result deleted from the model once, results remained statistically significant across all deletions, ranging from 1.80 ml·kg<sup>-1</sup> min<sup>-1</sup> (95% CI, 0.58 to 3.01) to 2.47 ml·kg<sup>-1</sup> min<sup>-1</sup> (95% CI, 1.25 to 3.69). Cumulative meta-analysis, ranked by year, demonstrated that improvements have been statistically significant since 2003, but with a trend towards a decrease in the magnitude of effect over time. Increases in VO2<sub>max</sub> were similar to group-level results when collapsed so that only one ES represented each study (ES, 2.01 ml kg<sup>-1</sup> min<sup>-1</sup>, 95% CI, 0.59 to 3.44, p = 0.01; Q = 19.4, p = 0.001;  $I^2 = 79.4\%$ , 95% CI, 51.2% to 91.3%, tau<sup>2</sup> = 1.7). With outliers deleted from the model, improvements in VO2<sub>max</sub> were smaller, with non-significant heterogeneity and overall inconsistency categorized as low (ES, 1.93 ml kg<sup>-1</sup> min<sup>-1</sup>, 95% CI, 0.83 to 3.02, p = 0.001; Q = 0.03, p = 0.86;  $I^2$  = 0%, 95% CI, 0% to 0%, tau<sup>2</sup> = 0). Upper and lower body *muscular strength* was assessed in five studies<sup>55</sup> 57-59 62 using free weights, grip strength, isokinetic strength and the sit-to-stand test with free weights. As shown in Table 4, statistically significant (p < 0.001) improvements in strength were observed. No statistically significant heterogeneity or mean inconsistency was observed (95% CI = none to moderate). The NNT was 4 with a percentile improvement of 22.2% and an estimated 8 million inactive US adults with AORD improving their strength if they

started exercising regularly. No statistically significant small-study effects were observed (p = 0.65). With each result deleted from the model once, results remained statistically significant across all deletions, ranging from 0.50 (95% CI, 0.21 to 0.79) to 0.68 (95% CI, 0.39 to 0.96). Cumulative meta-analysis, ranked by year, demonstrated that improvements in strength have been statistically significant since the first included study in 1989.<sup>58</sup> Changes in strength were similar to group-level results when collapsed so that only one ES represented each study (ES, 0.59, 95% CI, 0.33 to 0.85, p < 0.001; Q = 3.5, p = 0.48;  $I^2 = 0\%$ , 95% CI, 0% to 76.2%,  $tau^2 = 0$ ). There were no outliers. Insufficient data were available to analyze *BMI*. The one study that did provide change outcome results for BMI reported no statistically significant changes.<sup>56</sup>

### **DISCUSSION**

### **Overall Findings**

The primary purpose of the current systematic review with meta-analysis was to examine the effects of exercise (aerobic, strength training, or both) on anxiety in adults with AORD. The overall findings, a primary purpose of meta-analysis, <sup>65</sup> suggest that exercise is associated with both statistically significant and practically important reductions in anxiety among adults with selected types of AORD. These findings are supported by (1) a magnitude of effect comparable to or greater than anxiolytics, <sup>66</sup> (2) a large percentile improvement of 15.5, (3) a NNT of only 6, (4) a large number of physically inactive US adults with AORD who could benefit from exercising regularly (5.3 million), (5) similar findings when examined at the study versus group level, (6) continued existence of a statistically significant effect when each result was deleted from the analysis once, (7) similar findings when outliers were deleted and statistical

heterogeneity was reduced to a non-significant effect and overall inconsistency to zero, and (8) a consistent finding of improvements in anxiety since the first included study was reported in 1989.<sup>58</sup> Based on GRADE, it was concluded that anxiety was a critical outcome and that further research would unlikely change the direction of effect. While the current findings are encouraging, it is interesting to note that cumulative meta-analysis revealed a distinct trend for a reduction in the pooled ES over time (from -1.47 in 1989 to -0.40 in 2016) and based on meta-regression, a statistically significant association between greater reductions in anxiety with older versus more recent studies. While the specific reasons for this could not be determined, it may be that the experimental design and conduct of studies have improved over time. However, from the investigative team's perspective, it is highly unlikely that the results will become nonsignificant in future years. The former notwithstanding, the general conclusion that exercise is associated with reductions in anxiety among adults with selected types of AORD may need to be viewed with some caution given that the majority of included studies consisted of participants with fibromyalgia 50 51 55 56 59-63 while the remaining studies included those with osteoarthritis and/or rheumatoid arthritis. 52-54 57 58 However. meta-regression revealed no statistically significant association between type of AORD and changes in anxiety, thus allowing for the pooling of findings and a resultant increase in statistical power.

The final meta-regression model resulted in two statistically significant variables being included with earlier year of publication and changes in depression associated with greater reductions in anxiety. These findings further reinforce the influence of year of publication on changes in anxiety in the current systematic review with meta-analysis, a

potential reason for such having been previously mentioned. The greater reductions in anxiety associated with reductions in depression and quality-of-life based on simple meta-regression as well as depression in the multiple regression model illustrates the potential interaction between these factors and the difficulty in identifying such, especially in a systematic review with meta-analysis. Finally, for those studies in which data were available, <sup>50-63</sup> it is worthy to note that while the focus was on community deliverable exercise or exercise delivered in other settings in which the exercise intervention could be adapted for delivery in the community, two were delivered in either a university<sup>50 56</sup> or hospital<sup>54 55</sup> and one each in either a hospital and home, <sup>53</sup> university and home, <sup>57</sup> YMCA, <sup>51</sup> or home only. <sup>61</sup>

In addition to statistically significant and practically important improvements in anxiety, similar improvements were also observed for all secondary outcomes assessed (physical function, pain, depression, quality of life, VO2<sub>max</sub> in ml·kg<sup>-1</sup>·min<sup>-1</sup>, muscular strength). These findings are important because unlike pharmacologic interventions that are usually targeted to address one condition, exercise has the potential to improve multiple physiological and psychological outcomes. Given the former, it would seem plausible to suggest that continued efforts be made to increase the exercise and physical activity levels of adults with AORD.

### Implications for Research

There are at least eight implications for the conduct and reporting of future research on exercise and anxiety in adults with AORD. First, since only five of the studies included participants with osteoarthritis and/or rheumatoid arthritis, future randomized controlled trials on exercise and anxiety in these populations appear warranted. Second, exercise

was performed indoors in the majority of included studies. Given that previous research

has suggested the exercise performed outdoors may have better mood-enhancing effects than indoor exercise. 67 68 future research examining this phenomenon with respect to anxiety as well as other outcomes in adults with AORD seems appropriate. Third, future studies should focus on examining the dose-response effects of exercise on anxiety in adults with AORD and report complete information on the characteristics of the intervention, including intervention fidelity.<sup>69</sup> Such information is critical for the development of evidence-based recommendations aimed at practitioners. Fourth, since more than half of the studies were considered to be at high or unclear risk of bias with respect to allocation concealment, blinding of outcome assessors, and incomplete outcome reporting, future studies should address these issues in their experimental design and report such information. Notably, while all included studies were considered to be at a high risk of bias with respect to blinding of participants, this is difficult for researchers to address since unlike pharmacologic studies, it is almost impossible to blind intervention participants to group assignment in exercise intervention studies. Fifth, given the lack of data on exposure to psychotropic and analgesic medications before and during the studies, including any changes in medication during the study, it is suggested that future trials track and report this information, including pharmacologic equivalence between the intervention and control groups. Sixth, while a lack of data was reported on how and what level anxiety was assessed, all the studies used instruments apparently focused on generalized anxiety. However, anxiety is a heterogeneous construct that includes generalized anxiety disorder, separation anxiety disorder, selective mutism, specific phobia, social phobia, panic disorder and agoraphobia.<sup>70</sup>

Given the former, it is suggested that future studies report detailed information on the specific types of anxiety they are assessing so as to better identify what exact type(s) might be affected. Seventh, given previous meta-analytic research by others. 71 a focus on group versus individualized exercise may be preferable because of increased contact and social support. This may be especially true for ethnic and racial minorities.<sup>72</sup> Finally, and collectively, a study in which one might have clinical confidence in the results of might consist of a randomized controlled trial that (1) uses random sequence generation, for example, computer random generator, to assign to participants to an exercise intervention and attention-control group, (2) conceals allocation to group assignment using an approach such as sequentially numbered, sealed, opaque envelopes, (3) blinds personnel and outcome assessors to group assignment while noting the inherent risk that all exercise studies are traditionally unable to blind participants to group assignment, (4) accounts for incomplete data (dropouts, etc.) by conducting intention-to-treat analyses, (5) avoids selective reporting of data by providing results for both statistically significant and non-significant results, (6) includes sedentary participants with a selected type or types of arthritis and elevated baseline levels of anxiety, (7) includes valid and reliable instruments for the assessment of the different types of anxiety based on the most recent version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 70 (8) accounts for potential confounders (age, gender, race, ethnicity, education, income, pain, physical function, depression, co-morbidities, baseline levels of anxiety, sleep, medication use before and during the study, other nonexercise and non-medication uptake before and during the study), (9) based on a theoretical model, conducts group exercise intervention sessions (aerobic, strength

training, or both), based on the recent Consensus on Exercise Reporting Template, <sup>73</sup> (10) examines the mechanisms for changes in anxiety, and (11) conducts cost-effectiveness analysis of the intervention. While these recommendations are focused on exercise, alternative treatments exist. Thus, the most clinically useful study might consist of a mega-randomized controlled trial that addresses all currently available treatments. However, this is probably not realistic. Therefore, an alternative approach might be to conduct a network meta-analysis that includes both direct and indirect evidence from randomized trials of all available interventions (exercise, pharmacologic, etc.). <sup>74</sup> To the best of the authors' knowledge, no such study currently exists.

# **Implications for Practice**

The results of this study appear to have important implications for practice. First, since changes in both anxiety and secondary outcomes resulted in statistically significant and practically important improvements, exercise may be more vital than any other intervention given the apparent multiple benefits of such. In addition, the magnitude of effect (-0.40), NNT (6) and percentile improvement (15.5) observed in the current study were equivalent to a previous meta-analysis on the pharmacological treatment of generalized anxiety disorder in which the overall SMD effect size was -0.39, the calculated NNT was 6, and the percentile improvement was15.2. <sup>66</sup> While the current systematic review with meta-analysis was unable to establish with any degree of certainty the dose-response effects of exercise on anxiety in adults with AORD, it would appear plausible, given the numerous other benefits that can be derived as well as the minimal adverse events associated with exercise, to adhere to the Active Adult or Active Older Adult Guidelines from the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans Physical

Activity Guidelines<sup>25</sup> as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.<sup>75</sup> Broadly, this includes aerobic activities on most, if not all, days of the week, muscle strengthening activities at least 2 days per week, balance exercises at least 3 days per week, and flexibility exercises on a daily basis. However, these recommendations as applied to exercise and anxiety should be considered with respect to factors such as the lack of transparency with respect to risk of bias in the included studies.

## Strengths and Limitations

There are at least three apparent *strengths* of the current study. First, to the best of our knowledge, this is the first systematic review with meta-analysis to examine, as a primary outcome, the effects of exercise on anxiety in adults with AORD. This is important given (1) the prevalence of AORD,<sup>1</sup> (2) the expected future increase in the prevalence of AORD,<sup>2</sup> (3) the financial costs associated with AORD,<sup>3</sup> and (4) the previously reported finding that the prevalence of anxiety is almost twice that of depression.<sup>8</sup> Second, a novel and recently developed approach, the IVhet model, was used to pool findings.<sup>36</sup> This resulted in more robust estimates than those derived from the traditional random-effects model.<sup>37</sup> This is noteworthy given the need to provide the most accurate results possible when examining the effects of an intervention on selected outcome(s).

While there are several strengths to this study, there are also at least four potential *limitations*. First, similar to any aggregate data meta-analysis, the potential for ecological fallacy exists. Thus, it may be that the observed findings in the current study would not apply at the individual participant level. Second, and also common to any type

of aggregate data meta-analysis, meta-regression results do not support causal inferences because the included studies are not randomly assigned to covariates. Therefore, the associations observed in the current investigation would need to be assessed in appropriately powered randomized trials. Third, while a large number of statistical tests were conducted, no adjustments were made for such. Thus, some findings could have been nothing more than the play of chance. However, common to most aggregate data meta-analyses, no adjustments for multiple testing were made because of concerns about missing possibly important findings that could be tested in original trials. Fourth, since anxiety was assessed using self-report instruments, 50-63 the possibility of reporting bias in the original studies existed.

#### **CONCLUSIONS**

Exercise is associated with reductions in anxiety among adults with selected types of AORD. However, a need exists for additional, well-designed, randomized controlled trials on this topic.

#### **CONTRIBUTORS**

GAK was responsible for the conception and design, acquisition of data, analysis and interpretation of data, drafting the initial manuscript and revising it critically for important intellectual content. KSK was responsible for the conception and design, acquisition of data, drafting the initial manuscript, and revising all drafts critically for important intellectual content. LFC was responsible for the conception and design, acquisition of data, drafting the initial manuscript, and revising all drafts critically for important intellectual content. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

### **REGISTRATION**

- In accordance with Primary Reporting Items for Systematics Reviews and MetaAnalyses, our systematic review with network meta-analysis was registered with the
  International Prospective Register of Systematic Reviews (PROSPERO) on October 4,
  2016 (registration number CRD42016048728).
- **COMPETING INTERESTS**
- **None**.
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- All data are available upon request from the corresponding author.

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Table 1. Study characteristics.

Study and Year	Country	Participants	Exercise	Anxiety
			Intervention	Assessment
Baptista et al.,	Brazil	Women (N = 80) 18-65 yrs of age with FM assigned	Dance exercise 2 x/wk, 60 min/session,	STAI
2012 <sup>50</sup>		to exercise (n = 40, age, $\overline{x}$ = 49.5 yrs) or control (n	for 12 wks	
		= 40, age, $\overline{\times}$ = 49.1 yrs) group		
Beltran, 2003 <sup>51</sup>	United	Women (N = 21) 22-65 yrs of age with FM assigned	Aerobic aquatic exercise, 3 x/wk, 25	AIMS
	States	exercise (n = 11, age, $\overline{\times} \pm SD = 50.1 \pm 12.6$ yrs) or	min/session, 60-85% MHR, for 10 wks	
		control (n = 10, age, $\overline{\times} \pm SD = 53.7 \pm 6.9 \text{ yrs}$ )		
		group		
Cheung et al.,	United	Men and women (N=51) ≥ 65 yrs of age with knee	Aerobic exercise, 5 x/wk, 20-30	HADS
2017 52	States	OA assigned to exercise (n = 28, age, $\overline{x} \pm SD$ =	min/session for 8 wks, and strength	
		74.4 $\pm$ 7.5 yrs), or control (n = 23, age, $\overline{\times}$ $\pm$ SD =	exercise 3 x/wk, 30 min/session for 8 wks	
		71.8 ± 8.0 yrs) group	(10+ exercises)	
Fransen et al.,	Australia	Men and women (N=96) 59-85 yrs of age with hip or	Hydrotherapy exercises in warm water, 2	DASS21
2007 <sup>53</sup>		knee OA assigned to hydrotherapy (n = 55, age, $\overline{x}$	x/wk, 60 min/session, for 12 wks	
		$\pm$ SD = 70 $\pm$ 6.3 yrs), or wait-list control (n = 41,		
		age, $\overline{\times} \pm SD = 69.6 \pm 6.1 \text{ yrs}$ ) group		
French et al.,	Ireland	Men and women (N = 88) 40-80 yrs of age with hip	Aerobic & strength training, 30	HADS
2013 <sup>54</sup>		OA assigned to exercise (n = 45, age, $\overline{\times} \pm SD$ =	min/session, for 8 wks, up to 5 strength	

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		61.8 $\pm$ 9.7 yrs), or control (n = 43, age, $\times \pm$ SD =	exercises	
		60.8 ± 9.7 yrs) group		
Gowans et al.,	Canada	Men and women (N = 57) with FM assigned to an	Aerobic exercise (2 walking/jogging	MHI, STAI
2001 <sup>55</sup>		exercise (n = 30, age, $\overline{\times}$ ± SD = 44.6 ± 8.7 yrs), or	classes in a gym, 1 pool class), 3 x/wk,	
		control (n = 27, age, $\overline{\times} \pm SD = 49.8 \pm 7.3$ yrs) group	30 min/session, 60-75% MHR, for 23 wks	
Jones et al.,	United	Men and women (N = 101) 18-65 yrs of age with	Aerobic exercise 3 x/wk, 30 min/session,	FIQ (Anxiety)
2008 <sup>56</sup>	States	FM assigned to an exercise (n = 47, age, $\overline{\times}$ ± SD =	40-50% MHR & strength exercise, 3	
		49.6 $\pm$ 7.7 yrs), or control (n = 54, age, $\overline{\times}$ $\pm$ SD =	x/wk, 10 min/session, for 24 wks	
		49.8 ± 7.9 yrs) group		
Komatireddy et	United	Men and women (n = 49), 35-76 yrs of age with RA	Circuit weight training with light loads and	AIMS
al. <sup>57</sup>	States	assigned to exercise (n = 25, $\overline{\times}$ ± SD = 57.7 ± 9.8	high repetitions, 7 exercises, 2–3	
		yrs of age, range 40–72 yrs) or control (n = 24, $\overline{\times}$ ±	circuits/session, 12–15 reps, 30-second	
		SD = 60.5 ± 11 yrs of age, range 35–76 yrs) group	rest between sets, 20–27 min/session,	
			$\geq$ 3 x/wk, RPE of 3–4, for 12 wks	
Minor et al.,	United	Men and women (N = 115) 21–83 yrs of age with	Aerobic aquatics or walking group, 3	AIMS
1989 <sup>58</sup>	States	RA or OA assigned to a pool (n = 47), walking (n =	x/wk, 60 min/session (30 min of this was	
		36) or control group (n = 32)	aerobic), 60-80% MHR, for 12 wks	
Munguia-	Spain	Men and women (N = 60) 18-60 yrs of age with FM	Aerobic aquatic exercise, 3 x/wk, 20-30	STAI
Izquieerdo &		assigned to exercise (n = 35, $\overline{\times}$ ± SD = 50.0 ± 7.0	min/session, 50-80% MHR, & strength	
Legaz-Arrese,		yrs) or control (n = 25 $\overline{\times} \pm$ SD = 46.0 $\pm$ 8.0 yrs)	exercise 3 x/wk, 8-20 min/session, 1-3	

2008 <sup>59</sup>		group	sets, 8-15 reps, for 16 wks	
Sanudo et al.,	Spain	Women (N = 32) with FM assigned to exercise (n =	Aerobic/interval training, 2 x/wk, 30-35	VAS
2015 <sup>60</sup>		16, $\overline{\times}$ ± SD = 55.0 ± 8.0 yrs of age), or control (n =	min/session, 60-80% MHR, for 24 weeks	
		16, $\overline{\times}$ ± SD = 58.0 ± 6.9 yrs of age) group		
Schachter et al.,	Canada	Women (N = 143) 20–55 yrs of age with FM	Low impact, videotape-based, aerobic	FIQ (Anxiety)
2003 <sup>61</sup>		assigned to a short bout (n = 56, $\overline{\times} \pm SD = 41.9 \pm$	exercise to music. Short bout, 2 x/d, 7.1	
		8.6 yrs of age), long bout (n = 51, $\overline{\times} \pm$ SD = 41.3 $\pm$	x/wk, 12.3 min/session, 60% HRR; Long-	
		8.7 yrs of age), or control group (n = 36, $\overline{\times} \pm SD$ =	bout group: 1 x/d, 3.6 x/wk, 24.5	
		42.5 ± 6.7 yrs of age)	min/session, 60% HRR, for 16 wks	
Tomas-Carus et	Portugal	Women with FM (N = 33) assigned to aquatic	Pool exercises performed in warm water,	FIQ (Anxiety),
al., 2008 <sup>62</sup>		exercise (n = 17, $\overline{\times}$ ± SD = 50.7 ± 10.6 yrs of age)	3 x/wk, 20 min, aerobic phase, 60-65%	STAI
		or control group (n = 16, $\overline{\times} \pm SD = 50.9 \pm 6.7$ yrs of	MHR, strength exercise, 20 min, 4 sets,	
		age)	10 reps, for 32 wks	
Tomas-Carus et	Portugal	Women with FM (N = 34) assigned to aquatic	Pool exercises performed in warm water,	FIQ (Anxiety)
al., 2007 <sup>63</sup>		exercise (n = 17, $\overline{\times}$ ± SD = 51 ± 10.0 yrs of age) or	3 x/wk, 20 min, aerobic phase, 60-65%	
		control group (n = 17, $\overline{\times}$ ± SD = 51 ± 9.0 yrs of age)	MHR, strength exercises, 20 min, 4 sets,	
			10 reps, for 12 wks	

Notes: Description of groups from each study limited to those that met the criteria for inclusion;  $\bar{x}$  ± SD, mean  $\pm$  standard deviation; AIMS, Arthritis Measurement Impact Scale; DASS21, Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale; FIQ, Fibromyalgia Impact Questionnaire; FM, fibromyalgia; HADS, Hospital Anxiety & Depression Scale; HRR, heart rate reserve; MHI, Mental Health Inventory; min, minutes; MHR, maximum heart rate; STAI,

State-Trait Anxiety Inventory; MHR, maximum heart rate; OA, osteoarthritis; RA, rheumatoid arthritis; reps, repetitions; RPE, rating of perceived exertion; VAS, Visual Analog Scale; wk(s), week(s); yrs, years;



Table 2. Baseline characteristics of participants.

		Exercise	Control					
Variable	Groups/Participants	≅ <u>+</u> SD	Median	Range	Groups/Participants	≅ <u>+</u> SD	Median	Range
Age (years)	14/458	53.4 <u>+</u> 9.7	50	41 – 74	13/349	54.9 <u>+</u> 8.8	50	43 - 72
BMI (kg·m²)	7/204	29.0 <u>+</u> 1.5	29	27 - 31	7/170	28.4 <u>+</u> 1.7	28	27 – 31
VO <sub>2max</sub> (ml·kg <sup>-1</sup> ·min <sup>-1</sup> )	7/245	21.3 <u>+</u> 2.3	21	19 – 24	5/101	20.7 <u>+</u> 2.7	21	17 – 24

Notes: Groups represents number of exercise and control groups reporting data;  $\overline{\times}$  + SD, mean  $\underline{+}$  standard deviation; BMI, body mass index;  $VO_{2max}$ , maximum oxygen consumption.

Variable	Groups/Participants	≅ <u>+</u> SD	Median	Range
Length (weeks)	16/514	16 <u>+</u> 7	14	8 - 32
Frequency (times/week)	14/469	3.3 <u>+</u> 1.3	3	2 – 7
Duration (min/session)	14/450	28.8 <u>+</u> 14.3	30	10 – 60
Minutes per week	11/407	85.5 <u>+</u> 21.2	88	60 – 120
Minutes per week (adj)	7/277	61.3 <u>+</u> 22.7	58	33 – 99
Compliance (%)	8/312	74.3 <u>+</u> 19	80	38 - 97

Notes: Groups represents number of exercise groups reporting data;  $\overline{\times} \pm SD$ , mean  $\pm$  standard deviation; min, minutes; adj, adjusted for compliance.

Table 4. Results for primary and secondary outcomes (data reported as standardized effect size unless otherwise noted).

Variable	ES (#)	Participants (#)	≅ (95% CI)	Q (p)	<i>I</i> <sup>2</sup> (95% CI)	$ au^2$
Primary outcome						
- Anxiety	16	883	-0.40 (-0.65, -0.15)*	40.3 (<0.001)**	62.8 (36.2, 78.3	0.14
Secondary outcomes						
- Physical function	12	677	0.66 (0.34, 0.97)*	36.0 (0.0002)**	69.4 (44.5, 83.1)	0.19
- Pain	15	803	-0.62 (-1.12, -0.11)*	128.6 (<0.001)**	89.1 (83.7, 92.7)	0.75
- QOL	13	730	0.63 (0.35, 0.91)*	32.4 (0.001)**	63.0 (32.7, 79.7)	0.15
- Depression	15	813	-0.38 (-0.67, -0.10)*	46.3 (<0.001)**	69.7 (48.6, 82.2)	0.20
- VO2max (ml·kg <sup>-1</sup> ·min <sup>-1</sup> )	7	346	2.01 (0.85, 3.2)*	20.2 (0.003)**	70.3 (35.0, 86.4)	1.40
- Muscular strength	6	261	0.59 (0.33, 0.85)*	3.9 (0.6)	0 (0, 67.1)	0

Notes: ES, effect size; #, number;  $\overline{\times}$  (95% CI), mean effect size and 95% confidence interval; Q (p), Cochran Q statistic and alpha value for Q;  $I^2$  (95% CI), I-squared and 95% confidence interval;  $\tau^2$ , tau-squared; \*, statistically significant (two-tailed alpha value  $\leq$  0.05 and non-overlapping 95% confidence intervals); \*\*, statistically significant (alpha value  $\leq$  0.10);

Table 5. Final multiple regression model for changes in anxiety (N = 16).

Variable

Coefficient <u>+</u> SE

Variable	Coefficient + SE	<i>t</i> (p)	95% CI
Year of publication	0.035 <u>+</u> 0.010	3.50 (0.006)*	0.012 to 0.057
Changes in depression	0.316 <u>+</u> 0.758	4.16 (0.01)	0.110 to 0.521
Minutes of training per week	0.007 <u>+</u> 0.003	2.40 (0.06)	-0.0002 to 0.016
Intercept	-70.718 <u>+</u> 19.74	-3.58 (0.006)*	-115.19 to -26.24

Notes: SE, standard error; t, t-value; p, alpha value for t; CI, confidence interval.

## FIGURE LEGEND

- Figure 1. Flow diagram depicting the search process.
- Figure 2. Risk of bias results using the Cochrane Risk of Bias Assessment Instrument.
- Figure 3. Forest plot for changes in anxiety.
- Figure 4. Funnel plot for changes in anxiety.
- Figure 5. Cumulative meta-analysis for changes in anxiety.

## SUPPLEMENTARY FILES

Supplementary File 1. Search strategy for PubMed.

Supplementary file 2. List of excluded studies, including reasons for exclusion.

Supplementary file 3. Study-level risk of bias results using the Cochrane Risk of Bias

Assessment Instrument.

Supplementary file 4. Simple meta-regression results with changes in anxiety as the outcome.

Supplementary file 5. Evidence profile for changes in anxiety based on GRADE.

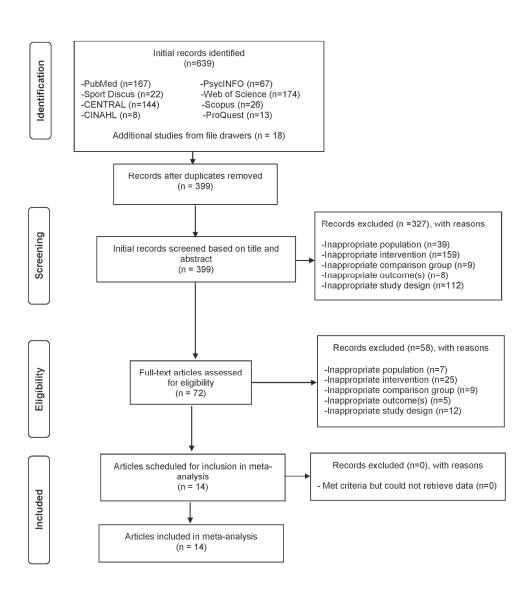


Figure 1. Flow diagram depicting the search process.

173x192mm (300 x 300 DPI)

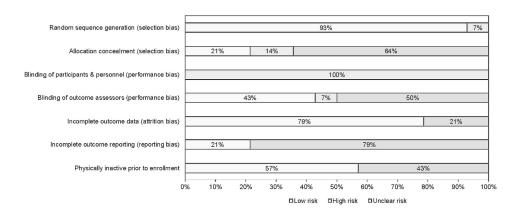


Figure 2. Risk of bias results using the Cochrane Risk of Bias Assessment Instrument.

173x77mm (300 x 300 DPI)

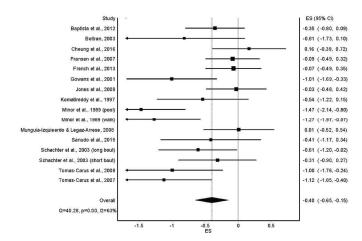


Figure 3. Forest plot for changes in anxiety.  $173x224mm (300 \times 300 DPI)$ 

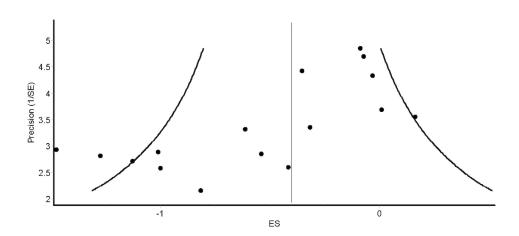


Figure 4. Funnel plot for changes in anxiety.

165x74mm (300 x 300 DPI)

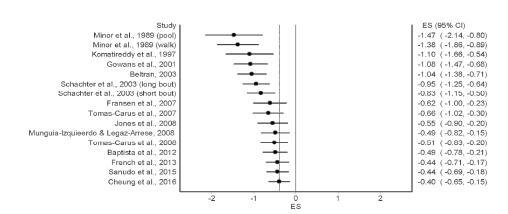


Figure 5. Cumulative meta-analysis for changes in anxiety.

173x87mm (300 x 300 DPI)

## Page 61 Stipptementary file 1. PubMed searcBMJ Open

Details - PubMed - NCBI

## Search Details

1 2 3 Query Translation: 4 (("exercise" [MeSH Terms] OR "exercise" [All Fields]) OR 5 ("exercise" [MeSH Terms] OR "exercise" [All Fields] OR 6 ("physical"[All Fields] AND "activity"[All Fields]) 7 OR "physical activity" [All Fields]) OR ("physical 8 fitness"[MeSH Terms] OR ("physical"[All Fields] AND "fitness" [All Fields]) OR "physical fitness" [All 9 Fields]) CR ("physical therapy modalities"[MeSH Terms] OR 10 ("physical"[All Fields] AND "therapy"[All Fields] 11 AND "modalities" [All Fields]) OR "physical therapy 12 modalities"[All Fields] OR ("physical"[All Fields] 13 Search URL 14 Result: 15 167 16 Translations: 17 18 exercise "exercise"[MeSH Terms] OR "exercise"[All Fields] 19 20 "exercise" [MeSH Terms] OR "exercise" [All Fields] OR ("physical" [All Fields] AND physical "activity" [All Fields]) OR "physical activity" [All Fields] activity 21 physical "physical fitness" [MeSH Terms] OR ("physical" [All Fields] AND "fitness" [All Fields]) 22 OR "physical fitness" [All Fields] fitness 23 "physical therapy modalities" [MeSH Terms] OR ("physical" [All Fields] AND 24 physical "therapy"[All Fields] AND "modalities"[All Fields]) OR "physical therapy modalities"[All 25 therapy Fields] OR ("physical"[All Fields] AND "therapy"[All Fields]) OR "physical therapy"[All 26 **Fields**1 27 osteoarthritis 'osteoarthritis"[MeSH Terms] OR "osteoarthritis"[All Fields] 28 "arthritis, rheumatoid"[MeSH Terms] OR ("arthritis"[All Fields] AND "rheumatoid"[All rheumatoid 29 Fields]) OR "rheumatoid arthritis" [All Fields] OR ("theumatoid" [All Fields] AND arthritis "arthritis"TAll Fields]) 30 31 arthritis 'arthritis"[MeSH Terms] OR "arthritis"[All Fields] 32 fibromyalqia "fibromyalqia"[MeSH Terms] OR "fibromyalqia"[All Fields] 33 anxiety "anxiety"[MeSH Terms] OR "anxiety"[All Fields] 34 35

Supplementary File 2. Excluded Studies, including reasons for exclusion.

- 1. 12th Commonwealth International Sport conference, 19-23 July 2002, Manchester, United Kingdom: abstract book. London;: Association of Commonwealth Universities 2002. *inappropriate study design*
- 2. ABSTRACTS. Journal of Orthopaedic & Sports Physical Therapy 2005;35(6):389-96. inappropriate study design
- 3. Fibromyalgia: poorly understood; treatments are disappointing. *Prescrire international* 2009;18(102):169-73. [published Online First: 2009/09/15] *inappropriate study design*
- 4. A Controlled Examination of Medical and Psychosocial Factors Associated With Low Back Pain in Combination With Widespread Musculoskeletal Pain. *Physical therapy* 2009;89(8):786-803. *inappropriate study design*
- 5. Acupuncture. Focus on Alternative and Complementary Therapies 2010;15(2):163-69. doi: 10.1211/fact.15.2.0065 inappropriate intervention
- 6. 2013 SYR Accepted Poster Abstracts. *International journal of yoga therapy* 2013;23 Suppl:32-53. [published Online First: 2013/01/01] *inappropriate study design*
- 7. Abbott R, Whear R, Nikolaou V, et al. Tumour necrosis factor-alpha inhibitor therapy in chronic physical illness: A systematic review and meta-analysis of the effect on depression and anxiety. *Journal of psychosomatic research* 2015;79(3):175-84. doi: 10.1016/j.jpsychores.2015.04.008 [published Online First: 2015/05/04] *inappropriate study design*
- 8. Adachi T, Nakae A, Maruo T, et al. Validation of the Japanese Version of the Pain Self-Efficacy Questionnaire in Japanese Patients with Chronic Pain. *Pain Medicine* 2014;15(8):1405-17. doi: 10.1111/pme.12446 *inappropriate study design*
- 9. Akhavan J. The effect of a dyadic intervention on self-efficacy, physical functioning, and anxiety/depression in older adults post joint replacement surgery [Ph.D.]. University of California, Los Angeles, 2008. *inappropriate study design*
- 10. Akman-Demir G, Saip S, Siva A. Behçet's disease. Current Treatment Options in Neurology 2011;13(3):290-310. doi: 10.1007/s11940-011-0120-2 inappropriate study design
- 11. Alamo MM, Moral RR, de Torres LAP. Evaluation of a patient-centred approach in generalized musculoskeletal chronic pain/fibromyalgia patients in primary care. Patient education and counseling 2002;48(1):23-31. doi: 10.1016/S0738-3991(02)00095-2 inappropriate intervention
- 12. Alayli G, Kuru O, Bilgici A. The effects of aerobic exercise and home exercise on pain and disability in patients with knee osteoarthritis. [Turkish]. Journal of Rheumatology and Medical Rehabilitation 2007; 18(2). <a href="http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/o/cochrane/clcentral/articles/761/CN-00707761/frame.html">http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/o/cochrane/clcentral/articles/761/CN-00707761/frame.html</a>. inappropriate comparison group
- 13. Alipour B, Homayouni-Rad A, Vaghef-Mehrabany E, et al. Effects of Lactobacillus casei supplementation on disease activity and inflammatory cytokines in rheumatoid arthritis patients: a randomized double-blind clinical trial. *International journal of rheumatic diseases* 2014;17(5):519-27. doi: 10.1111/1756-185X.12333 inappropriate intervention

- 14. Ambrose KR, Golightly YM. Physical exercise as non-pharmacological treatment of chronic pain: Why and when. *Best Practice & Research in Clinical Rheumatology* 2015;29(1):120-30. doi: 10.1016/j.berh.2015.04.022 *inappropriate study design*
- 15. Andrews NE, Strong J, Meredith PJ. Activity Pacing, Avoidance, Endurance, and Associations With Patient Functioning in Chronic Pain: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. Archives of physical medicine and rehabilitation 2012;93(11):2109-21. doi: 10.1016/j.apmr.2012.05.029 inappropriate study design
- 16. Ang D, Jensen M, Steiner J, et al. Combining cognitive-behavioral therapy and milnacipran for fibromyalgia: a feasibility randomized-controlled trial. *The Clinical journal of pain* 2013; 29(9). <a href="http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/o/cochrane/clcentral/articles/880/CN-00918880/frame.html">http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/o/cochrane/clcentral/articles/880/CN-00918880/frame.html</a>. *inappropriate study design*
- 17. Appelbaum KA, Blanchard EB, Hickling EJ, et al. Cognitive behavioral treatment of a veteran population with moderate to severe rheumatoid arthritis. *Behavior Therapy* 1988;19(4):489-502. doi: 10.1016/S0005-7894(88)80019-4 *inappropriate intervention*
- 18. Archer T, Josefsson T, Lindwall M. Effects of Physical Exercise on Depressive Symptoms and Biomarkers in Depression. *Cns & Neurological Disorders-Drug Targets* 2014;13(10):1640-53. *inappropriate study design*
- 19. Arcos-Carmona IM, Castro-Sanchez AM, Mataran-Penarrocha GA, et al. [Effects of aerobic exercise program and relaxation techniques on anxiety, quality of sleep, depression, and quality of life in patients with fibromyalgia: a randomized controlled trial]. *Medicina clinica* 2011;137(9):398-401. doi: 10.1016/j.medcli.2010.09.045 [published Online First: 2011/02/25] *inappropriate intervention*
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- 21. Arne M, Janson C, Janson S, et al. Physical activity and quality of life in subjects with chronic disease: chronic obstructive pulmonary disease compared with rheumatoid arthritis and diabetes mellitus. *Scandinavian journal of primary health care* 2009;27(3):141-7. doi: 10.1080/02813430902808643 [published Online First: 2009/03/24] *inappropriate study design*
- 22. Arnold L, Wang F, Ahl J, et al. Improvement in multiple dimensions of fatigue in patients with fibromyalgia treated with duloxetine: secondary analysis of a randomized, placebo-controlled trial. *Arthritis research & therapy* 2011; 13(3). <a href="http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/o/cochrane/clcentral/articles/474/CN-00843474/frame.html">http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/o/cochrane/clcentral/articles/474/CN-00843474/frame.html</a>. *inappropriate intervention*
- 23. Arnold L, Zlateva G, Sadosky A, et al. Correlations between Fibromyalgia Symptom and Function Domains and Patient Global Impression of Change: A Pooled Analysis of Three Randomized, Placebo-Controlled Trials of Pregabalin. Pain medicine (Malden, Mass) 2011; 12(2). <a href="http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/o/cochrane/clcentral/articles/608/CN-01016608/frame.html">http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/o/cochrane/clcentral/articles/608/CN-01016608/frame.html</a>. inappropriate study design

- 24. Arnold LM. Strategies for managing fibromyalgia. *The American journal of medicine* 2009;122(12 Suppl):S31-43. doi: 10.1016/j.amjmed.2009.09.009 [published Online First: 2010/01/09] *inappropriate study design*
- 25. Arnold LM, Arsenault P, Huffman C, et al. Once daily controlled-release pregabalin in the treatment of patients with fibromyalgia: A phase III, double-blind, randomized withdrawal, placebo-controlled study. *Current Medical Research and Opinion* 2014;30(10):2069-83. doi: 10.1185/03007995.2014.928275 inappropriate intervention
- 26. Arnold LM, Clauw D, Wang F, et al. Flexible dosed duloxetine in the treatment of fibromyalgia: a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial. *The Journal of rheumatology* 2010;37(12):2578-86. doi: 10.3899/jrheum.100365 [published Online First: 2010/09/17] *inappropriate intervention*
- 27. Arnold LM, Crofford LJ, Martin SA, et al. The effect of anxiety and depression on improvements in pain in a randomized, controlled trial of pregabalin for treatment of fibromyalgia. *Pain Medicine* 2007;8(8):633-38. doi: 10.1111/j.1526-4637.2007.00332.x *inappropriate intervention*
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- 29. Arnold LM, Wang F, Ahl J, et al. Improvement in multiple dimensions of fatigue in patients with fibromyalgia treated with duloxetine: secondary analysis of a randomized, placebo-controlled trial. *Arthritis research & therapy* 2011;13(3):R86. doi: 10.1186/ar3359 [published Online First: 2011/06/15] *inappropriate intervention*
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- 31. Arnold LM, Zhang S, Pangallo BA. Efficacy and safety of duloxetine 30 mg/d in patients with fibromyalgia: A randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled study. *The Clinical journal of pain* 2012;28(9):775-81. doi: 10.1097/AJP.0b013e3182510295 *inappropriate outcomes*
- 32. Arnold LM, Zlateva G, Sadosky A, et al. Correlations between fibromyalgia symptom and function domains and patient global impression of change: a pooled analysis of three randomized, placebo-controlled trials of pregabalin. *Pain medicine (Malden, Mass)* 2011;12(2):260-7. doi: 10.1111/j.1526-4637.2010.01047.x [published Online First: 2011/01/27] *inappropriate study design*
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- 34. Ayral X, Gicquere C, Duhalde A, et al. Effects of video information on preoperative anxiety level and tolerability of joint lavage in knee osteoarthritis. *Arthritis and rheumatism* 2002;47(4):380-2. doi: 10.1002/art.10559 [published Online First: 2002/09/05] *inappropriate intervention*

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- 36. Bagdath AO, Donmez A, Eroksuz R, et al. Does addition of 'mud-pack and hot pool treatment' to patient education make a difference in fibromyalgia patients? A randomized controlled single blind study. *International journal of biometeorology* 2015;59(12):1905-11. doi: 10.1007/s00484-015-0997-7 *inappropriate intervention*
- 37. Barlow J, Turner A, Wright C. A randomized controlled study of the Arthritis Self-Management Programme in the UK. *Health education research* 2000; 15(6). <a href="http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/o/cochrane/clcentral/articles/444/CN-00330444/frame.html">http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/o/cochrane/clcentral/articles/444/CN-00330444/frame.html</a>. *inappropriate intervention*
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- 40. Basler HD. Group treatment for pain and discomfort. *Patient education and counseling* 1993;20(2-3):167-75. [published Online First: 1993/05/01] *inappropriate intervention*
- 41. Bassey EJ. Longitudinal changes in selected physical capabilities: muscle strength, flexibility and body size. *Age and Ageing* 1998;27:12-16. *inappropriate study design*
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- 44. Bearne L, Walsh N, Jessep S, et al. Feasibility of an exercise-based rehabilitation programme for chronic hip pain. *Musculoskeletal care* 2011; 9(3). http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/o/cochrane/clcentral/articles/898/CN-01124898/frame.html. *inappropriate intervention*
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- 46. Bennell K, Ahamed Y, Jull G, et al. Physical Therapist-Delivered Pain Coping Skills Training and Exercise for Knee Osteoarthritis: Randomized Controlled Trial. *Arthritis care & research* 2016; 68(5).

- http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/o/cochrane/clcentral/articles/882/CN-01153882/frame.html. *inappropriate comparison group*
- 47. Bennell KL, Rini C, Keefe F, et al. Effects of Adding an Internet-Based Pain Coping Skills Training Protocol to a Standardized Education and Exercise Program for People With Persistent Hip Pain (HOPE Trial): Randomized Controlled Trial Protocol. *Physical therapy* 2015;95(10):1408-22. doi: 10.2522/ptj.20150119 [published Online First: 2015/05/30] *inappropriate study* design
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- 50. Birbara C, Ruoff G, Sheldon E, et al. Efficacy and safety of rofecoxib 12.5 mg and celecoxib 200 mg in two similarly designed osteoarthritis studies. *Current medical research and opinion* 2006; 22(1). http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/o/cochrane/clcentral/articles/019/CN-00554019/frame.html. *inappropriate intervention*
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- 53. Blikman T, Rienstra W, van Raaij TM, et al. Duloxetine in OsteoArthritis (DOA) study: study protocol of a pragmatic open-label randomised controlled trial assessing the effect of preoperative pain treatment on postoperative outcome after total hip or knee arthroplasty. *BMJ open* 2016;6(3):e010343. doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2015-010343 [published Online First: 2016/03/05] inappropriate study design
- 54. Blumenthal JA, Babyak MA, Moore KA, et al. Effects of exercise training on older patients with major depression. *Archives of Internal Medicine* 1999;159(19):2349-56. doi: 10.1001/archinte.159.19.2349 *inappropriate population*
- 55. Bojner Horwitz E, Kowalski J, Theorell T, et al. Dance/movement therapy in fibromyalgia patients: Changes in self-figure drawings and their relation to verbal self-rating scales. *The Arts in Psychotherapy* 2006;33(1):11-25. doi: <a href="http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.aip.2005.05.004">http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.aip.2005.05.004</a> inappropriate intervention
- 56. Bojner-Horwitz E, Theorell T, Anderberg UM. Dance/movement therapy and changes in stress-related hormones: A study of fibromyalgia patients with videointerpretation. *The Arts in Psychotherapy* 2003;30(5):255-64. doi: 10.1016/j.aip.2003.07.001 *inappropriate outcomes*

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Supplementary File 3. Study-level risk of bias results using the Cochrane Collaboration Instrument.

Reference	Random	Allocation	Blinding	Blinding	Incomplete	Selective	Inactive
	Sequence	Concealment	(Participants &	(Outcome	Outcome Data	Reporting	
			Personnel)	Assessors)			
Baptista et al., 2012 <sup>40</sup>	low	low	high	low	low	low	unclear
Beltran, 2003 <sup>41</sup>	low	unclear	high	unclear	low	unclear	low
Cheung et al., 2017 42	low	high	high	unclear	low	low	unclear
Fransen et al., 2007 <sup>43</sup>	low	unclear	high	low	low	low	low
French et al., 2013 <sup>44</sup>	low	low	high	high	low	unclear	unclear
Gowans et al., 2001 <sup>45</sup>	low	unclear	high	low	low	unclear	unclear
Jones et al., 2008 <sup>46</sup>	low	unclear	high	unclear	low	unclear	low
Komatireddy et al.47	low	unclear	high	low	low	unclear	unclear
Minor et al., 1989 <sup>48</sup>	low	unclear	high	unclear	unclear	unclear	low
Munguia-Izquieerdo &	low	unclear	high	low	low	unclear	low
Legaz-Arrese, 2008 <sup>49</sup>							
Sanudo et al., 2015 <sup>50</sup>	low	unclear	high	unclear	unclear	unclear	unclear
Schachter et al., 2003 <sup>51</sup>	high	high	high	unclear	low	unclear	low
Tomas-Carus et al.,	low	low	high	low	low	unclear	low
2008 <sup>52</sup>							
Tomas-Carus et al.,	low	unclear	high	unclear	unclear	unclear	low
2007 <sup>53</sup>							

Notes: low, low risk of bias; high, high risk of bias; unclear, unclear risk of bias.



Supplementary file 4. Simple meta-regression results with changes in anxiety as the outcome.

Comparison	ES (#)	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F(p)
Study Characteristics				
- Journal impact factor	16	.22	.05	0.4(0.52)
- Year of publication	16	.75	.56	51.5(<0.001)*
- Country study conducted (USA vs. other)	16	.13	.02	0.2(0.69)
- Type of control (exposure vs. no exposure) <sup>a</sup>	16	.08	.02	0.01(0.76)
- Matching (yes vs. no)	16	.39	.15	1.2(0.29)
- Random sequencing (high/unclear vs. low)	16	.05	.0003	0.17(0.69)
- Allocation concealment (high/unclear vs. low)	16	.22	.05	0.87(0.37)
- Blinding of participants & personnel (high/unclear vs. low) <sup>b</sup>	NA	NA	NA	NA
- Blinding of outcome assessors (high/unclear vs low)	16	.08	.007	0.43(0.66)
- Incomplete outcome data (high/unclear vs low)	16	.67	.45	14.4(0.002)*
- Selective reporting (Unclear vs low)	16	.39	.15	4.1(0.06)
- Participants physically inactive (hig4h/unclear vs low)	16	.21	.04	0.75(0.40)
- Sample size estimates provided (no versus yes)	16	.56	.32	4.6(0.05)*
- Agreed to participate in study (%)	12	.47	.22	4.9(0.05)*
- Study funded (no versus yes)	16	.34	.12	15.9(0.001)*
- Type of analysis (abp vs itt) <sup>c</sup>	19	.21	.05	0.89(0.36)
- Test used (STAI and FIQ vs. AIMS) <sup>d,e</sup>	19	.41	.17	2.3(0.14)
Participant Characteristics				
- Exercise dropouts (%)	15	.34	.12	8.2(0.01)*
- Control dropouts (%)	13	.31	.10	1.3(0.27)
- Age (years)	14	.53	.28	11.9(.005)*
- Gender (mixed vs. females)	16	.14	.02	.38(0.54)
- AORD (rheumatoid/osteoarthritis vs. fibromyalgia)	16	.10	.01	.15(0.71)
- Rheumatic symptoms (years)	8	.37	.14	1.45(0.27)
- Years since diagnosis	4	.23	.05	.33(0.62)

Exercise Intervention Characteristics

Exercise intervention orial acteristics				
Exercise modality (aerobic/weight training vs. both)	16	.57	.32	8.19(0.01)*
Land vs. water-based exercise	16	.30	.09	1.03(0.33)
Length of training (weeks)	16	.16	.51	.44(0.52)
Frequency of training (times/week)	14	.02	.0004	.01(0.92)
Duration of training (min/session)	12	.43	.18	7.7(0.02)*
Compliance (% of exercise sessions attended)	8	.04	.001	.02(0.90)
Minutes of training per week	11	.61	.37	33.1(.0003)*
Minutes of training per week (adjusted for compliance)	7	.17	.03	.19(0.68)
Total minutes of training	11	.63	.40	15.0(0.004)*
Total minutes of training (adjusted for compliance)	7	.22	.05	0.32(0.60)
Supervision status (unsupervised or supervised vs. both)	16	.49	.24	4.20(0.04)*
Location of exercise (facility or home vs both)	16	.49	.24	4.20(0.04)*
Participation (group or self vs. both)	16	.49	.24	4.20(0.04)*
Adverse events (yes vs. no)	5	.23	.05	.17(0.71)
Changes in Secondary Outcomes				
Physical function	12	.26	.07	0.87(0.37)
Pain	15	.09	.008	0.32(0.58)
Depression	13	.35	.12	7.49(0.01)*
Quality of life	13	.79	.63	45.8(<0.001)*
VO <sub>2max</sub> (ml·kg <sup>-1</sup> ·min <sup>-1</sup> )	7	.62	.38	2.27(0.19)
Muscular strength	6	0.30	.09	.30(0.61)

Notes: abp, analysis-by-protocol; itt, intention-to-treat; STAI, State-Trait Anxiety Inventory; FIQ, Fibromyalgia Impact Questionnaire; AIMS, Arthritis Impact Measurement Scale; <sup>a,</sup> Exposure, includes attention control, usual care and other types of exposure while no exposure, includes nonintervention and wait-list controls; <sup>b</sup>, NA, not applicable because all studies considered at high risk of bias given the inability to blind participants to exercise interventions; <sup>c,</sup> number of groups exceed 16 because two studies reported results for both abp and itt analysis; <sup>d,</sup> insufficient number of outcomes to include the DASS, HADS, MHI

and VAS; e, number of groups exceed 16 because three studies reported anxiety results using two different instruments:



## Page 103 of 106 supplementary file 5. GRADE results.

#### BMJ Open

Author(s): What are the effects of exercise (aerobic, strength training, or both) on anxiety in adults with arthritis and other rheumatic diseases? Date July 3, 2017

1 Question: Exercise compared to control for reducing anxiety in adults with arthritis and other rheumatic diseases

2 Setting Home, Facility, Both

			Quality ass	essment		V-	Nºofp	atients	Effe	ect	Quality	Importance
№ of studies	Study design	Risk of bias	Inconsistency	Indirectness	Imprecision	Other considerations	exercise	control	Relative (95% CI)	Absolute (95% CI)	quanty	in portaino s
Anxiety (f	follow up: mear	15. <b>\$</b> week	s; assessed with: \	∕ari•us s elfrepo	rt instruments)			7				4
14	rand∙mized trials	not serious	not serious	notserious	notserious	publication bias strongly suspected all plausible residual confounding would reduce the demonstrated effect a	514	369	not estimable -	SMD 0.4 SD lower (0.65 lower to 0.15 lower)	⊕⊕⊕⊕ HIGH	CRITICAL

 $20 \! \! \! \text{cl}$  : Confidence interval; SMD: Standardized mean difference

### <sup>22</sup>Explanations

24a. Statistically significant small-study effects, suggesting the possibility of publication bias, possible confounding by year of publication, with the magnitude of effect over time smaller 25with more recent studies. For peer review only - http://bmjopen.bmj.com/site/about/guidelines.xhtml

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BMJ Open



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# **PRISMA Checklist**

Section/topic	#	Checklist item	Reported on line #					
TITLE								
Title	1	Identify the report as a systematic review, meta-analysis, or both.	1-3					
ABSTRACT								
Structured summary	2	Provide a structured summary including, as applicable: background; objectives; data sources; study eligibility criteria, participants, and interventions; study appraisal and synthesis methods; results; limitations; conclusions and implications of key findings; systematic review registration number.	23-49					
INTRODUCTION								
Rationale	3	Describe the rationale for the review in the context of what is already known.	62-119					
Objectives	4	Provide an explicit statement of questions being addressed with reference to participants, interventions, comparisons, outcomes, and study design (PICOS).	120-123					
METHODS								
Protocol and registration	5	Indicate if a review protocol exists, if and where it can be accessed (e.g., Web address), and, if available, provide registration information including registration number.	48-49; 128- 129; 792-795					
Eligibility criteria	6	Specify study characteristics (e.g., PICOS, length of follow-up) and report characteristics (e.g., years considered, language, publication status) used as criteria for eligibility, giving rationale.	130-189					
Information sources	7	Describe all information sources (e.g., databases with dates of coverage, contact with study authors to identify additional studies) in the search and date last searched.	190-198					
Search	8	Present full electronic search strategy for at least one database, including any limits used, such that it could be repeated.	199-203; Supplementary file 1					
Study selection	9	State the process for selecting studies (i.e., screening, eligibility, included in systematic review, and, if applicable, included in the meta-analysis).	205-225					
Data collection process	10	Describe method of data extraction from reports (e.g., piloted forms, independently, in duplicate) and any processes for obtaining and confirming data from investigators.	226-240					
Data items	11	List and define all variables for which data were sought (e.g., PICOS, funding sources) and any assumptions and simplifications made.	227-234; 241- 245					
Risk of bias in individual studies	12	Describe methods used for assessing risk of bias of individual studies (including specification of whether this was done at the study or outcome level), and how this information is to be used in any data synthesis.	246-262					
Summary measures	13	State the principal summary measures (e.g., risk ratio, difference in means).	264-278					



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# PRISMA Checklist

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4 5	Synthesis of results	14	Describe the methods of handling data and combining results of studies, if done, including measures of consistency (e.g., $ ^2$ ) for each meta-analysis.	279-316
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7	Page 1 of 2							
8 9 10	Section/topic	#	Checklist item	Reported on line #				
11 12 13	Risk of bias across studies	15	Specify any assessment of risk of bias that may affect the cumulative evidence (e.g., publication bias, selective reporting within studies).	334-349				
14 15	Additional analyses	16	Describe methods of additional analyses (e.g., sensitivity or subgroup analyses, meta-regression), if done, indicating which were pre-specified.	317-343; 350- 360				
16	RESULTS							
18 19 20 21	Study selection	17	Give numbers of studies screened, assessed for eligibility, and included in the review, with reasons for exclusions at each stage, ideally with a flow diagram.	369-373; Figure 1; Supplementary file 2				
22 23	Study characteristics	18	For each study, present characteristics for which data were extracted (e.g., study size, PICOS, follow-up period) and provide the citations.	371-449; Tables 1-3				
24 25 26	Risk of bias within studies	19	Present data on risk of bias of each study and, if available, any outcome level assessment (see item 12).	Supplementary file 3				
27 28	Results of individual studies	20	For all outcomes considered (benefits or harms), present, for each study: (a) simple summary data for each intervention group (b) effect estimates and confidence intervals, ideally with a forest plot.	Figure 3				
29 30	Synthesis of results	21	Present results of each meta-analysis done, including confidence intervals and measures of consistency.	Table 4; 459- 477; 503-617				
32 33	Risk of bias across studies	22	Present results of any assessment of risk of bias across studies (see Item 15).	450-457; Figure 2				
34 35 36 37 38	Additional analysis	23	Give results of additional analyses, if done (e.g., sensitivity or subgroup analyses, meta-regression [see Item 16]).	478-502; Table 5, Figures 4 & 5; Supplementary files 4 & 5				
39 40	DISCUSSION							
40 41 42	Summary of evidence	24	Summarize the main findings including the strength of evidence for each main outcome; consider their relevance to key groups (e.g., healthcare providers, users, and policy makers).	619-764				

### **PRISMA Checklist**

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4 Limitations	25	Discuss limitations at study and outcome level (e.g., risk of bias), and at review-level (e.g., incomplete retrieval of identified research, reporting bias).	765-778			
Conclusions	26	Provide a general interpretation of the results in the context of other evidence, and implications for future research.	779-782			
FUNDING	UNDING					
10 Funding	27	Describe sources of funding for the systematic review and other support (e.g., supply of data); role of funders for the systematic review.	799-801			

MA Group (2u med1000097)
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