

Bleakley CM, O'Connor SR, et al. Effect of accelerated rehabilitation on function after ankle sprain: randomised controlled trial. BMJ 2010;340:c1964.

Design: randomized clinical trial

Purpose of study: to test the effectiveness of an early (in the first week) exercise program in patients with acute ankle sprains

Reasons not to cite as evidence:

- The groups were randomized to exercise or to standard therapy, but the descriptions of the interventions is insufficiently informative to characterize what happened with each group
 - o It appears that the groups differed only during the first week of treatment, when the exercise group performed some mobility and stretching activities which are illustrated in a separate document; this is clear enough to be satisfactory
 - o However, the description of the first week of treatment, after saying that the exercise group was given a treatment diary to record their exercise activities, says that external ankle support (taping, bracing, and bandaging) and analgesics were not routinely provided
 - It is not clear whether the exercise group had these supports available or whether they were used; simply because they were not routinely provided does not mean that they were not used
 - Further, it is not at all clear whether these supports were available and used by the control group as part of the “standard treatment” to which the experimental intervention was being compared
 - o Both groups had the same treatment from weeks 1 to 4, and it is stated that a set of exercises was undertaken for 30 minutes each week, once under supervision and 4 times as a home based treatment
 - This almost certainly has to refer to 30 minutes each session rather than 30 minutes each week, but the scope of the exercise program is not clear
 - o Further, Figure 2 appears to show that the course of lower extremity functional gains is very similar between the two groups, since the two curves track one another very closely
- Information statement which can be derived from the study: in the setting of a grade 1 or grade 2 acute ankle sprain, patients can be encouraged to begin mobilization and flexion/extension functional movement pattern exercises during the first week after the injury in addition to standard treatment with protection, rest, ice, compression, and elevation. The injured joint need not be kept immobile in the first week after the sprain has occurred