

5th International Conference on

Alzheimer's Disease & Dementia

September 29-October 01, 2016 London, UK

Potential benefits of functional task exercise on cognition and functional status of older adults with mild Cognitive Impairment

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Regular exercise and participation in mentally stimulating and socially engaging activities are commonly recommended to help sustain brain functions particularly for older adults with mild cognitive impairment (MCI). People with MCI have an increased risk of developing dementia. Nevertheless, it is highly possible to delay the onset of dementia through interventions by slowing the rate of cognitive decline or improve the cognitive functions in persons with MCI. Previous studies have demonstrated combined cognitive and physical activities can induce a greater increase in neurogenesis, and may have additional effects in promoting cognitive functions. Daily functional tasks are innately cognitive-demanding and involve components of stretching, strengthening, balance and endurance as seen in a traditional exercise program. Functional task exercise, with an exercise component incorporated into everyday tasks may be more meaningful and practical for individuals with cognitive impairment. This presentation will illustrate this point using the results of a randomized controlled study investigated the potential benefits of a combined cognitive and exercise program, with functional task as intervention, on cognitive functions and functional status in 83 older adults with MCI. Significant differences have shown between the Functional Task Exercise group and the conventional cognitive training group in memory ($p<0.01$), executive function ($p<0.05$), and functional status ($p<0.05$). All improvements were maintained during 3 months follow-up. Furthermore, functional balance was found significantly improved for those in the Functional Task Exercise group ($p<0.05$). Important contributing factors and future directions of prevention interventions for person with MCI will be discussed.

Biography

Lawla Law has been graduated from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University as an Occupational Therapist and practiced for about 25 years with extensive experience in acute and community settings in Hong Kong and Australia. She completed her PhD from the James Cook University in Australia and has changed to work in academics since 2014. Presently she has been working as an Assistant Professor at the Tung Wah College in Hong Kong where she has continued her research. Her research interests are in Geriatric rehabilitations with a special emphasis on assessments and innovative interventions for cognitive impairment.

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