PHYSIOTHERAPIST- LED GROUP BASED EXERCISE PROGRAM IMPROVED PHYSICAL FITNESS IN PATIENTS WITH CHRONIC HEART FAILURE AND COMORBIDITIES. A RANDOMIZED CONTROLLED TRIAL

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Objective.
To investigate the impact of physiotherapist-led group based exercise program on physical fitness and health related quality of life (HR-QoL) in patients with chronic heart failure and comorbidities.

Methods.
Forty-eight patients (10 women), age 71 ± 8 years, ejection fraction 27±10%, and NYHA II-III, performed a bicycle test, 6 minute walk test (6MWT) and muscle endurance tests. HR-QoL was evaluated with short form (SF-36). After the assessments the patients were randomized to either intervention or control group. The intervention consisted of an individually designed group-based exercise program for 60 minutes, twice a week, during 3 months. The control group was asked to live their usual life during the study period.

Result.
A total of 42 patients completed the study, 6 dropped-out. Physical fitness significantly improved i.e exercise tolerance (p= 0.001), 6MWT (p=0.014), shoulder abduction (p=0.028) heel lift (p=<0.0001) and HR-QoL (p=0.018) in the intervention group compared to the control group.

Conclusion.
Physiotherapist-led group based exercise should be used to improve physical fitness and HR-QoL in patients with CHF that also have comorbidities.