Functional Reach Improvement in Normal Older Women After Alexander Technique Instruction

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Abstract:
BACKGROUND
Functional reach (FR) is a clinical measure of balance. The Alexander Technique (AT) is a nonexercise approach to the improvement of body mechanics. This study investigated a possible relationship between FR performance and AT instruction.

METHODS
Three groups comprising women older than 65, with the exception of one male control, were studied:
1. a pilot group
2. experimental group
3. control group
Groups 1 and 2 were given eight 1-hour, bi-weekly sessions of AT instruction with pre- and posttests in FR, whereas group 3 was only given pre- and posttests in FR.

RESULTS
Groups 1 and 2 both showed significant improvement in FR performance. Group 2 was retested 1 month after posttest and showed a slight decrease in FR performance. For Groups 1 and 2, a questionnaire allowing qualitative responses on a four-item scale showed an overall positive response to the AT instruction.

CONCLUSIONS
AT instruction may be effective in improving balance and therefore reducing the incidence of falls in normal older women.

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