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The 6-minute walk test in chronic stroke survivors: Shall we perform a practice test?

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Introduction: The 6-Minute Walk Test (6MWT) has been widely used as an endurance test in stroke survivors (SS). The American Thoracic Society recommends performing a practice test to avoid the learning effect; however studies involving people with stroke only perform one test.

Aim: The aim of this study was to research if there is a significant difference between the distance walked during the first and second 6MWT in chronic SS.

Methods: We recruited 30 (9 woman and 21 man) chronic SS (months since the stroke, 51.55 ± 71.58), with an average age of 54.8 ± 15 year. Two 6MWT were performed in an indoor corridor, 30 meters long, in accordance with the international guidelines. The participants were allowed to use their customary assistive/orthotic device. When physical or supervision aid from another person was needed, we trained a companion (normally a relative) to walk with the participant without influencing his/her gait speed. Subjects had to rest at least 30 minutes before starting the second test. We used a paired Student t test in order to know if there were significant differences between the first and second 6MWT.

Results: SS walked a mean of 250.67 ± 111.05 meters during the first 6MWT and a mean of 276.93 ± 123.19 meters during the second one. There was a significant difference (26.27 ± 22.6 m) between both test ($p < 0.001$; $95\% \text{CI} = 17.82-34.71$).

Conclusion: A practice test must be performed in chronic SS to measure the distance walked during the 6MWT since it has been shown that there are significant differences between the first and second test.

Biography

Ana Lista Paz has done her PhD about the pulmonary function and the respiratory muscles of chronic stroke survivors. She has published some papers about this topic and also presented several communications in different congress. Nowadays she is part time lecturer in the Faculty of Physiotherapy of ACoruña University.

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