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# Audit of pilates for lower back pain shows promising results

Recent research into the effectiveness of pilates as treatment for lower back pain shows promising results



By Jonny Dillon

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## Research shows promising results into pilates as a treatment for lower back pain

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Lower back pain is one of the leading causes of disability worldwide, with more than one in every two people experiencing it in their lifetime. Promisingly, patients in a recent review reported a 62 per cent reduction in pain over their six-week clinical pilates course.

Chartered physiotherapist and clinical pilates teacher Jo Tripp specialises in muscle imbalance and spinal rehabilitation. In the five years that she has been running a clinical pilates service at Nuffield Health Cardiff and Vale Hospitals, there have been many individual success stories.

Recently, working with both Jo and lead spinal surgeon Mr Mike McCarthy, medical student Moez Karim undertook a small study at the hospital to evaluate the effectiveness of pilates with regard to improving lower back pain, flexibility and function.

In addition to a reduction in pain, patients in the programme experienced an increase in flexibility and an 86 per cent increase in function. To achieve such an improvement is significant. To be totally conclusive about the role of clinical pilates as a mainstay treatment for lower back pain, these remarkable results will now require further studies involving larger groups.



**Physiotherapist Jo Tripp**

Physiotherapist Jo Tripp said: "I am passionate about pilates and spinal rehabilitation and see great results, both in patients who have become de-conditioned as a result of longstanding pain, and also in athletes where various muscle groups have become out of balance leading to pain and dysfunction.

"The modified clinical pilates programme at The Vale Hospital is personalised to individual needs, and as such is a very effective rehabilitation tool when used for the right patients, and this study, while only a small sample, certainly bears that out."

Patients initially attend a one-to-one physiotherapy appointment with Jo where she starts their individual rehabilitation. Then patients attend a six-week programme with the option to progress to the intermediate class – some patients continue to attend as they find the classes highly beneficial in the management of their condition.

The six-week study included 30 patients performing pilates exercises tailored to their specific needs.

Research lead Moez Karim explained: “To be eligible to take part, patients had to have pain that they could tolerate and possess basic functional fitness. Patients in the study had to be able to sit and stand up independently from an exercise mat and we excluded those with osteoporosis, unstable cardiac conditions, restrictive lung problems, pregnancy and worsening neurological symptoms.

“For this selected group of patients with lower back pain, the study results are very encouraging. The patient-specific pilates programme resulted in significant improvement in pain, alongside improved function and flexibility. There have been similar findings on the efficacy of pilates as a treatment, shown in a multitude of papers. Longer term follow up and larger sample sizes will now need to be studied to fully determine the role of pilates in the treatment of chronic low back pain.”

**To book a free information evening at the Nuffield Health private hospital, please go to [www.nuffieldhealth.com/hospitals/cardiff-and-vale/events](http://www.nuffieldhealth.com/hospitals/cardiff-and-vale/events)**

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