Introduction

In the past, the Cardiac and Pulmonary Rehab program used a moderate form of intensity continuous exercise using gym equipment. Recently, the American Heart Association included high intensity interval training as a recommendation for patients with heart disease, although without clearly indicating the prescription modalities[1]. Discovering a 50-75% dropout rate for our independent, unsupervised exercise (phase III) program, the team wanted to redesign the rehab program in order to decrease the dropout rate, and increase attendance and program adherence.

A 2013 Cochrane Systematic Review of interventions [2] proved there was insufficient evidence to support practice recommendations

The Fit for Life program was redesigned for group classes utilizing variable intensity interval exercise with passive recovery.

Method

Nine clients were enrolled in a 28 session cycle pilot program utilizing variable intensity interval exercise.

Pre and post measurements were gathered for each client:
• MET level
• VO2 level
• Quality of Life
• Time Walked Test

Individual parameters were based on physiological responses.

Client knowledge of the Borg scale for perceived exertion and self-monitoring of 70%-80% of their target heart rate was assessed prior to starting the program

A post program participant questionnaire was conducted which provided valuable feedback in the areas of patient/staff knowledge, exercise safety, value to the patient and future recommendations.

Conclusion

Group exercise increased communication between the client and the health care team by providing an opportunity for frequent patient interaction.

Early assessment and intervention of client health changes may reduce exacerbation and readmissions.

Limitations included:
• small pilot group
• wide range of patient physical and mental conditions
• available class time and space.

Results

Seven clients (77%) completed the pilot program. Two clients did not complete the 28 session pilot program due to new onset of health issues

Variable Intensity Interval Exercise Metrics