



Tanner Health Miles: Walking and Talking Multiple Sclerosis



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BACKGROUND

A grant was awarded to the Tanner Foundation from Acorda Therapeutics for “Tanner Center Health Miles” in April 2013. The funds provided were used to cover purchase of pedometers from Virgin Health Miles, monthly participation fee for web based monitoring and bimonthly walking sessions with therapists to provide supervised exercise with an educational component.

OBJECTIVES

The program offered by the Tanner Foundation was designed to meet two goals. One goal was to promote healthy lifestyle through exercise to incur cardiovascular benefits, increase endurance, decrease rate of depression, increase flexibility and for weight management. The second goal addressed by the program was to increase knowledge of MS in the areas of symptom management, heat intolerance, exercise and stretching protocols, community resources available to participants and updates on medication and research.

METHOD

Participants enrolled in Tanner Center Health Miles were required to complete the following self-administered questionnaires: Tanner Center Health Miles Exercise Questionnaire, MSQOL- 54 and FSS along with the TUG and the T25’W. All metrics were completed at initiation of walking program, at 6 months and program conclusion. 24 walking sessions were offered to participants with varying topics of discussion. Pedometers were issued to each participant through Virgin Health Miles and walking steps and activity miles were monitored by the Executive Director on a monthly basis. The levels were as follows: Level 1 represents less than 7,000 steps per day, Level 2 7,000-11,999 steps/15-29 active minutes, Level 3 12,000-19,999 steps/30-44 active minutes, Level 4 20,000+ steps/45+active minutes. Incentives were given at 3 months, 6 months and at close of program.

RESULTS

Initial data on 39 participants were collected, 6 month follow up data for 11 participants and 11 completed the final metrics. The FSS score for 7 out of the 11 participants decreased from pre walking program to post walking program. 2 remained the same and 2 increased only slightly by one point. The MSQOL-54 scores improved for all participants excluding one from program initiation to close. The Tanner Health Miles Exercise Questionnaire captured 3 participants that reported not exercising at initial evaluation, but indicated that they were exercising at program close. The remaining 8 were exercising prior to program and continued to exercise at program close. Out of the 2 walking metrics, the TUG scores for participants improved within the 12 month program for 7 out of the 11 participants. One participant cut TUG time by 7 seconds. Improvements on the T25’W occurred for 6 out of the 11 participants. There were 2 participants who reached Level 2 in the pedometer program within 4 months and remained at this level for the duration of the program. One participant who achieved this level and remained at this level attended 19 out of the 24 walking sessions.

CONCLUSION

Results of this program suggest that exercise with accountability through bimonthly meetings and daily monitoring through a pedometer can lead to increased activity and improvements in the areas of mobility and quality of life in persons with MS.

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