

In-bed cycling exercise safe and effective for ICU patients

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Early cycling within the first four days of mechanical ventilation among patients with stable blood flow is safe and feasible. (Representative image)

OTTAWA: Contrary to the beliefs that intensive care unit (ICU) patients cannot afford any physical activity, early bicycle exercise during their stay in a hospital ICU may help some patients recover more quickly, a new study has found.

The “TryCYCLE” study that was published in the journal “PLS ONE” demonstrated that physiotherapists can safely start in-bed cycling sessions with critically ill, mechanically ventilated patients early on in their ICU stay.

“People may think that ICU patients are too sick for physical activity, but we know that if patients start in-bed cycling two weeks into their ICU stay, they will walk farther at hospital discharge,” said Michelle Kho, Assistant Professor at McMaster University, Hamilton in Ontario state, Canada.

The Researchers studied 33 patients – 18 years or older – in the ICU at St. Joseph’s Healthcare Hamilton. As a treatment, the patients in the ICU did 30 minutes of supine cycling using a motorized stationary bicycle affixed to the bed, six days a week.

“Early cycling within the first four days of mechanical ventilation among patients with stable blood flow is safe and feasible,” the study found.

The researchers noted that patients who survive their ICU stay are at high risk for muscle weakness and disability.

“Muscle atrophy and weakness starts within days of a patient’s admission to the ICU. Cycling targets the legs, especially the hip flexors, which are most vulnerable to these effects during bed rest,” the study noted.

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