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## RESISTANCE EXERCISE TRAINING AND THE CONTROL OF BLOOD PRESSURE IN HYPERTENSIVE HUMANS

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### ABSTRACT

The present manuscript is focused on the use of resistance exercises as measure in order to control of blood pressure, and to demonstrate that moderate physical exercise is not a risk factor for health of hypertensive humans. As methodology, bibliographical and documentary analyses were performed with basis on scientific literature. As result, resistance exercises have presented different cardiovascular effects depending on their intensity. Generally, low-intensity exercises have improved localized muscular resistance, and have increased blood pressure values during its execution, but reduced arterial pressure after its accomplishment; in the long term, low-intensity resistance training may promote a small drop in the blood pressure of hypertensives. On the other hand, high intensity resistance exercises, which aim to improve muscle strength / hypertrophy, have promoted an extremely large increase in blood pressure during its execution, with important risks to the rupture of preexisting cerebral aneurysms in hypertensive patients. Also, those exercises have not been presenting a chronic hypertensive effect, despite reducing blood pressure after its completion. Thus, low-intensity resistance training has been indicated for hypertensive patients in addition to aerobic exercises, but high-intensity resistance exercises should be avoided in these patients.

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### INTRODUCTION

As the decrease of muscle mass evolves, expected event with advancing age and physical inactivity, it is observed the fall in basal and rest metabolic level, leading to greater accumulation of fat and consequent development of obesity and arterial hypertension respectively. In order to prevent such framework, the American College Sports Medicine / ACSM recommends performing aerobic exercises predominantly associated with the American College Sports Medicine / ACSM recommends performing aerobic exercises predominantly associated with

resistance and flexibility exercise training for hypertensive humans (AMERICAN COLLEGE OF SPORTS MEDICINE, 2010). Prospective epidemiological studies have demonstrated that regular aerobic physical exercises reduce blood pressure levels, decreasing excess body weight and dyslipidemia, as well as insulin resistance and stress (BARRETTO; NEGRÃO, 2006). In this context, as recommended by the American College Sports Medicine / ACSM - aerobic physical exercises are beneficial to hypertensive humans, especially as a supporting intervention in the non-pharmacological therapy of hypertension conditions. Regular practice of physical exercises in the prevention and treatment of hypertension has been sustained by the hypotensive capacity of the aerobic exercise,

which results low indexes risks to human health (FORJAZ et al., 2003). Since 1950s, publications of scientific effort such as the study by Morris et al. (1953), considering postmen who walks or using bicycles, and the other ones who performed bureaucratic functions, showed that the most active postmen had a lower incidence of cardiovascular diseases than their more sedentary colleagues (GHORAYEB, BARROS, 1999). In the 1960s, other studies showed a concern about the use of resistance exercises by hypertensive and cardiac patients, such as Humphreys and Lind (1963) and Lind and McNicol (1967). Thus, the results of these studies contributed to the insertion of the practice of resistance exercises (WHELTON et al, 2002) in international health guidelines, a practice that was absent until mid-1990 in the mentioned guideline. During the last decades, there has been an expressive increase in demand for the resistance training modality, specifically regarding the use of this expedient as a potential strategy in the primary and secondary prophylaxis of the various and variant cardiomyopathies. Likewise, when carried out in a correct way and supervised by a qualified professional, resistance exercise contributes to the maintenance of the good health of humans, especially with regard to muscular strength and well-being psychosocial.

Actually, changes in the sedentary lifestyle, with regular practice of physical exercises, reduces by 40% the risk of death from cardiovascular diseases, among them hypertension. Physical exercise promotes positive physiological adaptations, reducing risks for development of cardiovascular diseases, and promoting greater autonomic control of the heart rate and reduction in blood pressure levels (HASKELL et al., 2007; MONTEIRO, 1996). There are many types of exercise such as isometric, isotonic and isokinetic. Isometric exercise integrates maintained muscle contraction without joint motion, while isotonic modality involves muscle contraction accompanied of joint movement. Instead, isokinetic exercise realizes joint motion in a constant speed. The use of some terms such as resistance exercise or strength training has classically been referring to an exercise by which the movement of the body's segment is performed against the opposition of an external force usually offered by some type of equipment. However, unanimity regarding the benefits of using aerobic exercises to control blood pressure does not reach the sphere of resistance exercises, and over the last decades there has been a visible increase in the scientific interest regarding the analysis of cardiovascular effects of the practice of high impact resistance exercises (FORJAZ et al., 2003).

#### **BENEFICIAL AND DETRIMENTAL EVIDENCES RELATIVE TO RESISTANCE EXERCISE TRAINING**

Relative to the use of resistance exercises and the possibility of harmful results, several hypotheses have been raised, among them the most serious are the excessive elevation of blood pressure leading to rupture of arterial aneurysms, or repeated pressure overload resulting abnormal hypertrophy concentric myocardium. Despite the efforts made to sustain these risks and effects, research has shown satisfactory results with respect to use of resistance exercises, including cardiovascular benefits (Graves et al., 2001; STEIN, 2007). From the point of view of those benefits, there has been an increase in the indication of bodybuilding for the recovery process in different cardiovascular conditions - stroke, peripheral obstructive vascular disease, acute myocardial infarction, heart transplantation, congestive heart failure (CAMERA,

SANTARÉN, JACOB FILHO, 2008). On the other hand, there are indirect forms (equations) and direct measures of exercise intensity in order to prescript physical exercise; classically, these diverse methods have lower or greater precision, as well as the risk of complications during the exercise execution (LANCHA JÚNIOR; LANCHA, 2016). In general, predictive equations are developed from regressive statistical methods, which makes them imprecise and with a high standard error of estimation. As a consequence, prediction methods may be associated to bias of measurement. Comparative study has reported acute cardiovascular effects in response to leg-press exercises performed with various intensities (1, 6 and 20 RM) and continuous aerobic cycle ergometer (75-80% of reserve heart rate) (POLITO, 2003). Accordingly, when performed with high loads and few repetitions, leg-press exercise resulted lower cardiac work (double-product) than exercises involving smaller loads and with a high number of repetitions. Exercises with 1 RM and 6 RM would offer lower cardiac risk than exercises 20 RM. Importantly, lower cardiac risk does not mean that there is not cardiovascular risk. The extent of the possible injury will always depend on the patient's level of effort when performing the exercise. With basis on a methodology of resistance exercise of different body segments, Bataglin *et al.* (2010) concluded that there was a safe increase of systolic blood pressure levels in patients submitted to resistance exercises. However, involvement of large muscle groups and high loads resulted a tendency to increase systolic blood pressure levels. Thus, this elevation does not imply an immediate threat to the patients' health, but serves as an alert for the possible complications with regard to the practice of high-load exercises. Also, Focht and Koltyn (1999) have showed that high-intensity exercises unchanged blood pressure levels, both systolic and diastolic. Other studies (REZK et al., 2006; SIMAO et al., 2005) have postulated a reduction of systolic blood pressure measures in humans submitted to very intense exercises - an effect not described in previous investigations (RAGLIN; TURNER; EKSTEN, 1993).

Resistance exercises produce an equivalent or greater increase of the arterial pressure in relation to the continuous aerobic exercises, but a smaller heart rate increase (FORJAZ, 2003). Consequently, double-product values have been lower than 30,000, which would be the score for angina. However, blood pressure values have been directly and linearly associated with the amount of recruited muscle mass in order to contract during resistance exercise. These circumstances has resulted important peripheral vascular resistance and health risks (FLECK; KRAEMER, 2006). Actually, the pressure load is related with the required resistance, as well as duration of muscle contraction and rest period (CASTINHEIRAS; COSTA FILHO; FARINATTI, 2010). Although the 1 RM test is considered a gold standard for the prescription of the intensity of resistance exercises, some authors have pointed the possibility of injury in the 1 RM test application. However, no author has related occurrence of accidents due execution of these tests (REYNOLDS; GORDON; ROBERGS, 2006). It is noteworthy that the Valsalva maneuver contributes to elevate blood pressure measures during resistance exercises; with intensity equal to or greater than 80% of 1 RM, the present maneuver is inevitable during the resistance exercises (BARRETTO, NEGRÃO, 2006). The maneuver in question, created by the Italian physician Antonio María Valsalva and very widespread nowadays, consists of forcing the air against closed lips and a stuffy nose, that is, any attempt to emit air

with the closed glottis or with the mouth and the nose closed (CASTIGLIONI, 1947). Physical exercise has been widely used for prevention and for treatment of cardiovascular and metabolic diseases. Brazilian organizations such as the Brazilian Society of Sports and Exercise Medicine (SBMEE), Brazilian Society of Cardiology (SBC), as well as international societies such as American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) and the International Federation of Sports Medicine (FIMS) have recommended physical activity with adequate dose and orientation (BARRETTO; NEGRÃO, 2006; SANTOS et al., 2008). Accordingly, respective guidelines support predominant practice of aerobic physical exercise by hypertensive humans, combined to resistance and flexibility exercise training (AMERICAN COLLEGE SPORTS MEDICINE, 2010; SOCIEDADE BRASILEIRA DE CARDIOLOGIA, 2015; FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE MÉDECINE DU SPORT, 2001).

With respect to the recommendation of intensity levels for resistance exercises and the use of predictive equations, the statistical methods are regressive, making it with a high standard error of estimation. In this way, those methods are imprecise to indicate the intensity of the resistance exercise (MOURA; PERIPOLLI; ZINN, 2002). Regarding the application of the method by perceived subjective exertion (PSE), although they are widespread, these recommendations are based on few experimental studies in which their effective use has been tested. Tiggemann (2012) has achieved a satisfactory relationship between PSE and 1 RM, without changes in blood pressure. Other studies suggest that PSE may be an indicator of the intensity of resistance exercise (RE), but it cannot indicate cardiovascular overload with the multiple series of RE because there is no association between PSE and cardiovascular variables (SOUSA; PINHEIRO; MONGE, 2010). Thus, for a better reproducibility of the 1 RM test, it is recommended to follow well established protocols, in which the predictive methods are used in order to reduce the number of attempts to find the maximum load (BRZYCKI, 1993).

Despite of exercise types, aerobic or resistance modality, systolic blood pressure has progressively increased, while diastolic blood pressure remains or is slightly reduced with 20% to 30% of maximum voluntary contraction (CVM). In response to superior overload, muscular pressure becomes greater than the intravascular pressure of the vessels of the contracted muscle, leading to an increase in SBP, DBP and PVP (peripheral vascular resistance) (TAKARADA et al., 2000; FLECK; KRAEMER, 2006). There is scientific evidence that indicates that a single session of aerobic exercise induces the reduction in blood pressure levels in both normotensive and hypertensive patients. However, in the case of resistance exercises it is still not well understood, although adaptive alterations of diastolic blood pressure is evidenced (FOCHT; KOLTYN, 1999; FORJAZ et al., 2006). Therefore, there is a possibility of alteration in SBP due to the use of resistance exercises, supporting the importance of SBP for the prescription and execution of resistance exercises for hypertensive humans presenting high risks for cardiovascular complications (COLLIER et al., 2008). The direct method of measuring blood pressure would be through intra-arterial catheterization, because it is considered gold standard; however, it is an invasive method, and hasn't been indicated to evaluate asymptomatic individuals (CASTINHEIRAS et al., 2012). Recently, the indirect auscultatory method has been used in researches on hemodynamic behavior during sessions

of resistance exercises (SOCIEDADE BRASILEIRA DE CARDIOLOGIA, 2015). Oscillometric method produces absolute values of blood pressure capable of comparing blood pressure responses in resistance exercises performed with multiple series and different loads, although this must be done at the end of the exercise (CASTINHEIRAS et al., 2012). Relative to the 1 RM test, oscillometric method would be used immediately after completing the eccentric phase of the exercise, as recommended by the VI Brazilian Hypertension Guideline that requires the validation of the device by the British Hypertension Society (BHS) and Brazilian Institute of Metrology, Standardization and Industrial Quality (INMETRO) (POLITO et al., 2007; SOCIEDADE BRASILEIRA DE CARDIOLOGIA, 2015). On the other hand, the autonomic nervous system is divided in sympathetic and parasympathetic, which in turn acts on the modulation of heart rate, which is increased in response to sympathetic action, and is decreased when there is predominance of vagal action. Elevated heart rate variability (HR) has been associated to greater efficiency of autonomic mechanisms (VANDERLEI et al., 2009). Differentially, there is a relationship between increased sympathetic activity, lower heart rate variability and cardiovascular adverse events, such as hypertension, heart failure and acute myocardial infarction (FERREIRA et al., 2013).

## Conclusion

Aerobic physical training promotes an important hypotensive effect in hypertensive patients and, therefore, has been recommended for the treatment of hypertension. However, there is now a growing scientific interest in the cardiovascular effects of another type of exercise, the resistance exercise training. These exercises are characterized by contractions of specific muscles against an external resistance. Low intensity resistance exercises are indicated for hypertensive humans, in combination to aerobic exercises, but high intensity resistance exercises should be dosed and monitored in these patients.

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