

Drug-Free Treatment for Restless Legs Symptoms

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ORLANDO, FLA. — Consistent, moderate exercise can significantly improve the severity of restless legs syndrome symptoms without medication, a study has shown.

Despite evidence that lifestyle factors play an important role in RLS, “virtually all research studies have focused on pharmacologic therapies,” Fred Tudiver, M.D.,

said at the annual meeting of the North American Primary Care Research Group.

Dr. Tudiver and colleagues at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City randomized 11 of 28 patients to a reconditioning exercise program; the remaining 17 received no intervention. The intervention included 12 weeks of light- to moderate-intensity aerobic and muscular strength training three times per week.

Patients in the study—all of whom were at least 18 years old (average age 53) and

had a diagnosis of RLS—were recruited from a community-based family medicine teaching center and a hospital-based wellness center. Exclusion criteria were anemia, any orthopedic condition that limited ambulation, any coronary event in the previous 6 months, uncontrolled hypertension, and current use of medication for RLS.

Before and after the intervention, patients completed the International Restless Legs Syndrome Study Group Rating Scale, a questionnaire that assessed symptom

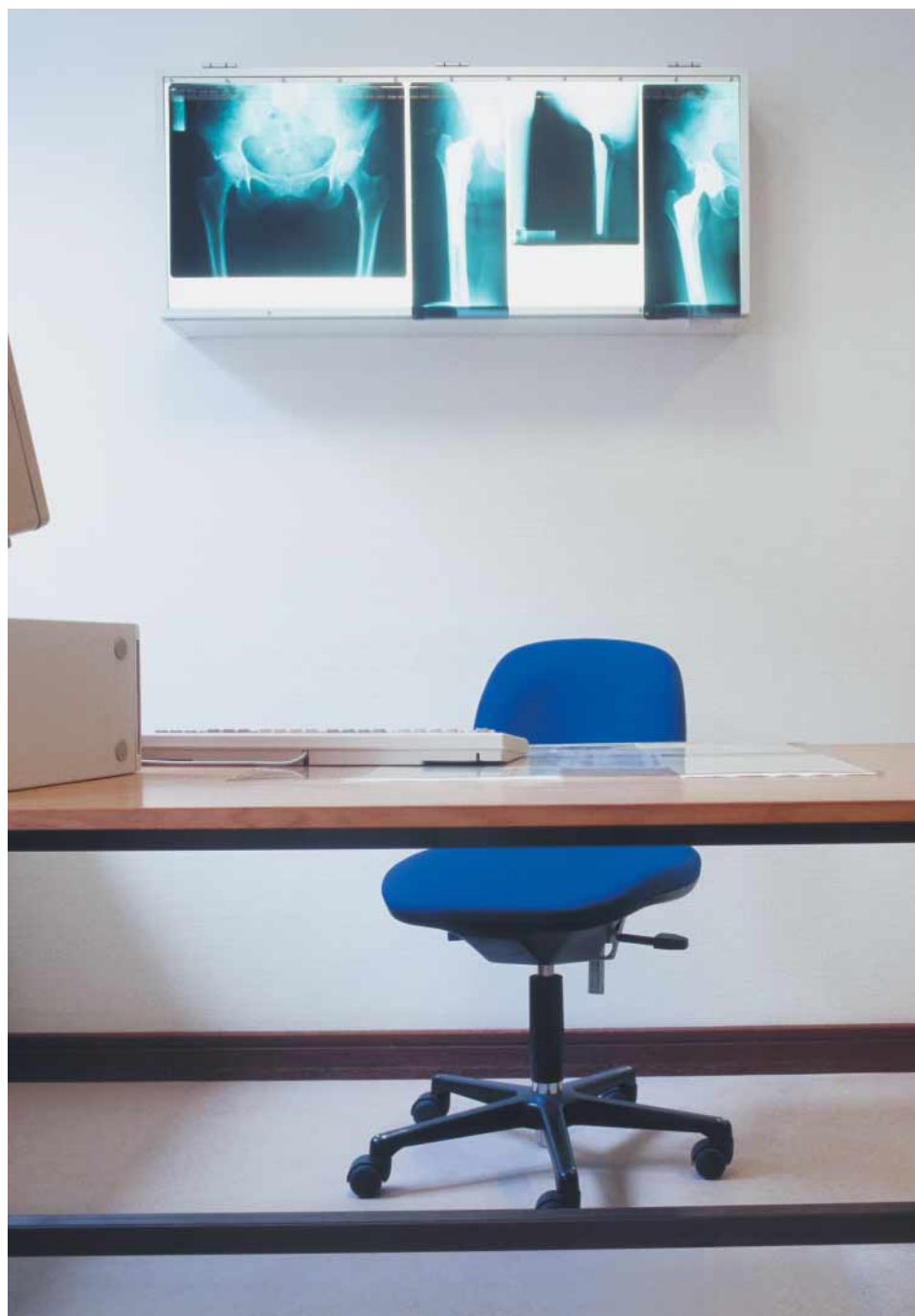
frequency and severity on a scale of 0-40.

At baseline, patients in both groups did not differ significantly in their RLS severity scores. After the 12-week intervention, however, median scores for patients in the exercise group had improved from 20.6 to 13.1, while median scores for patients in the control group went from 22.5 to 21.5.

“The results suggest a promising, simple, community-based intervention that can be prescribed to patients in family practice settings,” Dr. Tudiver said. ■

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