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Effectiveness of technology-based distance physical rehabilitation interventions for improving physical functioning in stroke: a systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials

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1 Title: Effectiveness of technology-based distance physical rehabilitation interventions for  
2 improving physical functioning in stroke: a systematic review of randomized controlled trials

3

#### 4 **ABSTRACT**

5 **Objective:** To study the effectiveness of technology-based distance physical rehabilitation  
6 interventions on physical functioning in stroke.

7 **Data sources:** A systematic literature search was conducted in six databases from January 2000 to  
8 May 2018.

9 **Study selection:** Inclusion criteria applied PICOS (Patient, Intervention, Comparison, Outcome,  
10 Study design) framework as follows: (P) stroke; (I) technology-based distance physical  
11 rehabilitation interventions; (C) any comparison without the use of technology; (O) physical  
12 functioning; (S) randomized controlled trials (RCTs). The search identified in total 693 studies, and  
13 the screening of 162 full-text studies revealed 13 eligible studies.

14 **Data extraction:** The studies were screened using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic  
15 Reviews and Meta-analysis (PRISMA) guidelines, and assessed for methodological quality and  
16 quality of evidence. Meta-analysis was performed if applicable.

17 **Data synthesis:** Thirteen studies were included, and online video monitoring was the most used  
18 technology. Seven outcomes of physical functioning were identified – activities of daily living  
19 (ADL), upper and lower extremity functioning, balance, walking, physical activity, and  
20 participation. A meta-analysis of six RCTs indicated that technology-based distance physical  
21 rehabilitation had a similar effect on ADL (standard mean difference (SMD) 0.06; 95%CI: -0.22 to  
22 0.35,  $p = .67$ ) compared to the combination of traditional treatments (usual care, similar and other  
23 treatment). Similar results were obtained for other outcomes, except inconsistent findings were  
24 noted for walking. Methodological quality of the studies and quality of evidence were considered  
25 low.

26 **Conclusions:** The findings suggest that the effectiveness of technology-based distance physical  
27 rehabilitation interventions on physical functioning might be similar compared to traditional  
28 treatments in stroke. Further research should be performed to confirm the effectiveness of  
29 technology-based distance physical rehabilitation interventions for improving physical functioning  
30 of persons with stroke.

31

32 **Keywords:** systematic review, rehabilitation technology, distance physical rehabilitation, stroke

33

34 **List of abbreviations:**

35	ADL	Activities of daily living
36	BI	Barthel Index
37	BBS	Berg Balance Scale
38	CCRCT	Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials
39	CINAHL	Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature
40	DVD	Digital versatile disc
41	EMBASE	Excerpta Medica Database
42	FAM	Fugl-Meyer Assessment
43	FONEFIM	Telephone version of the Functional Independence Measure
44	GRADE	Grading of Recommendations, Assessment, Development and Evaluation
45	ICF	International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health
46	LLFDI	Late-Life Function and Disability Instrument
47	MBI	Modified Barthel Index
48	MeSH	Medical subject headings
49	MD	Mean difference
50	Ovid MEDLINE	Database of the National Library of Medicine
51	PEDro	Physiotherapy Evidence Database
52	PICOS	Patient, intervention, comparison, outcome, study design
53	PRISMA	The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analysis
54	PROSPERO	Prospective Register of Systematic Reviews
55	RCT	Randomized controlled trial
56	SIS	Stroke Impact Scale
57	SMD	Standard mean difference
58	WOS	Web of Science

**59 Introduction**

60

61 Stroke is one of the leading cause of death and long-term disability worldwide.<sup>1,2</sup> The most  
62 important risk factors for stroke have been noted diabetes, hypertension, and smoking.<sup>3,4</sup> Symptoms  
63 of stroke vary individually with a wide range of motoric, mental, lingual, sensory, and cognitive  
64 impairments that cause functional challenges in daily life and decrease the quality of life.<sup>5-7</sup>  
65 Recovery from stroke (i.e., improvement of daily functional activities) is usually very individual  
66 and rapid in the acute stage of the disease, but may require several months or years of rehabilitation  
67 in some stroke survivors.<sup>8,9</sup> It has been estimated that approximately one-third stroke survivors  
68 show low functional performance at five years after stroke onset.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, rehabilitation is an  
69 important part of post-stroke care and is highly needed, although substantive advances have been  
70 made in acute stroke management.<sup>11</sup>

71

72 In previous decades, technology-driven treatments such as virtual reality and robotics have gained  
73 popularity in stroke rehabilitation.<sup>11-14</sup> These systematic reviews have reported that the  
74 effectiveness of technology-driven treatments is similar to that of traditional treatments in  
75 improving the outcomes of physical functioning such as grip strength, gait speed, upper extremity  
76 functioning, or global motor functioning in persons with stroke.<sup>11-14</sup> To date, treatments involving  
77 virtual reality and/or robotics usually depend on facility requirements, face-to-face interaction  
78 between a patient and a healthcare professional, and advanced technology. Moreover, these  
79 technologies may not always be user-friendly for participants and exert a considerable economic  
80 burden on the healthcare system and institutes.<sup>15,16</sup>

81

82 Only few systematic reviews have investigated the effectiveness of distance rehabilitation in  
83 persons with stroke.<sup>17-19</sup> Laver et al. (2013) examined the effectiveness of telerehabilitation



84 consisting of 10 randomized controlled trials (RCTs) involving a total of 933 participants.<sup>17</sup>  
85 Interventions focused on all types of home-based telerehabilitation using telephone,  
86 videoconferencing, desktop videophones, in-home messaging device, or combination of email,  
87 online chat programs and virtual online library.<sup>17</sup> This review did not show differences in the  
88 activities of daily living (ADL), quality of life, or upper extremity functioning of persons with  
89 stroke receiving telerehabilitation and those receiving face-to-face rehabilitation or no  
90 rehabilitation. Also, Chen et al. (2013) compared all types of telerehabilitation with that of  
91 traditional treatments by assessing seven RCTs and observed no substantial differences in ADL (n =  
92 792), balance (n = 52), or upper extremity functioning (n = 46).<sup>18</sup> A systematic review by  
93 Johansson et al. (2011) on all types of telerehabilitation in stroke care involving overall nine RCT-,  
94 observational, and qualitative studies concluded that home-based telerehabilitation or technology-  
95 based virtual rehabilitation improved the physical health of stroke survivors.<sup>19</sup> However, the same  
96 systematic review indicated the need for additional studies on telerehabilitation, especially to  
97 determine its cost-effectiveness and resource utilization.<sup>19</sup>

98  
99 To conclude, there is a call for gathering more evidence on the effectiveness of technology-based  
100 distance rehabilitation in stroke, especially focused only on physical rehabilitation interventions.  
101 The present study investigated the effectiveness of technology-based distance physical  
102 rehabilitation interventions on physical functioning compared to a combination of traditional  
103 treatments such as similar treatment, other treatment, and usual care in persons with stroke. In this  
104 review, technology-based distance physical rehabilitation interventions were defined as any  
105 physical functioning-, activity-, or exercise-promoting interventions that used a technological  
106 device that was monitored or guided by a healthcare professional remotely. Additionally, physical  
107 functioning refers to the International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Healthy (ICF)  
108 categories of body function, activities, and participation.<sup>20</sup>

109

110

111 **Methods**

112

113 *Search strategy*

114

115 A systematic literature search was conducted using the following databases: Cochrane Central  
116 Register of Controlled Trials (CCRCT), Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature  
117 (CINAHL), Excerpta Medica Database (EMBASE), Database of the National Library of Medicine  
118 (Ovid MEDLINE), Physiotherapy Evidence Database (PEDro), and Web of Science (WOS). The  
119 first search was performed for studies published between January 2000 and March 2017. Updated  
120 searches were conducted using the same databases for studies published between April 2017 to  
121 September 2017 and October 2017 to May 2018. A combined flow chart of study selection is  
122 presented in Figure 1. Details of the protocol used for performing this systematic review are  
123 registered on Prospective Register of Systematic Reviews (PROSPERO) and can be accessed at  
124 [www.crd.york.ac.uk/PROSPERO/display\\_record.asp?ID=CRD42017065918](http://www.crd.york.ac.uk/PROSPERO/display_record.asp?ID=CRD42017065918).

125

126 Inclusion criteria were designed according to the PICOS (i.e., Patient, Intervention, Comparison,  
127 Outcome, Study design) framework and were as follows: (P) persons with stroke; (I) any  
128 technology (e.g., wearable device, Internet, telephone calls, or smartphone application) used to  
129 monitor, promote, or increase physical functioning as a distance physical rehabilitation intervention;  
130 (C) any control group not receiving rehabilitation intervention (i.e., wait-list) or receiving  
131 rehabilitation intervention without the use of technology (i.e., no rehabilitation, in-person physical  
132 rehabilitation interventions, or other treatment for monitoring, promoting, or increasing physical  
133 functioning); (O) outcome measures of physical functioning; and (S) RCTs that were published in

134 English, Finnish, Swedish, or German. Literature search was limited also to research in humans.  
135 Systematic reviews, non-randomized or non-controlled interventional studies, observational studies,  
136 discussion or short reports, abstracts, discussion papers, qualitative studies, and protocols were  
137 excluded from the review. Moreover, studies involving other participants with different diagnosis  
138 without a separate analysis of persons with stroke were excluded.

139

140 A researcher (AR) performed the searches in the selected databases along with other members of  
141 the research team (VP and TS) and two information specialists. Search terms included various  
142 technology terms and interventional study types (i.e., RCT or clinical trial), comprehensive  
143 keywords describing physical rehabilitation interventions (e.g., exercise, exercise therapy, therapies,  
144 therapy modalities, rehabilitation, multidisciplinary therapy, motor activity, participation, and  
145 physical activity), and stroke-related terms (e.g., stroke, brain infarction, and cerebrovascular  
146 disease). The original search strategies are described in Appendix 1. The search strategy used  
147 medical subject headings (MeSH) or keyword headings. An additional manual search was  
148 conducted using references mentioned in the retrieved studies.

149

#### 150 *Data extraction*

151

152 Two reviewers (AR and VP) independently screened the titles and abstracts of the studies in line  
153 with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analysis (PRISMA)  
154 guidelines<sup>21</sup> using the PICOS criteria. Next, relevant studies satisfying the PICOS criteria were  
155 independently evaluated for full-text assessment by two reviewers (AR and VP). A third reviewer  
156 (SH) evaluated the studies in case of a disagreement. If needed, corresponding authors of the  
157 included studies were contacted for obtaining additional information. Agreement level between the  
158 reviewers was assessed using Cohen's Kappa, with a value of 0.62 indicating substantial agreement

159 in the title and abstract screening, and 0.71 indicating substantial agreement in the full-text study  
160 screening.<sup>22</sup>

161

162 *Methodological quality of the studies and quality of evidence*

163

164 Methodological quality of the included RCTs was assessed independently by two reviewers (AR  
165 and VP) using the Furlan method guideline for systematic reviews.<sup>23</sup> A third reviewer (SH) was  
166 consulted in case of a disagreement. The 13-item Furlan method guideline for systematic reviews  
167 rates RCTs based on (1) adequate randomization, (2) concealment of treatment allocation, (3)  
168 blinding of participants, (4) blinding of care providers, and (5) blinding of outcome assessors, (6)  
169 described and acceptable rates of drop-out, (7) analysis of participants in allocated groups, (8)  
170 suggestion of selective outcome reporting, (9) similarity among groups at baseline, (10) no or  
171 similar co-intervention, (11) compliance, (12) timing of outcome assessment, and (13) no other  
172 sources of potential bias.<sup>23</sup> An item was scored positive (“yes”) if the criterion was fulfilled,  
173 negative (“no”) if the criterion was not fulfilled, or unclear (“*unsure*”) if required information was  
174 inadequately reported. The total score of a study reflected the total sum of positive scores. The  
175 maximum score of a study according to the Furlan (2015) method guideline for systematic reviews  
176 was 13 points.

177

178 The quality of evidence according to the outcomes included in the meta-analyses was evaluated  
179 independently by two reviewers (AR and VP) using the Grading of Recommendations, Assessment,  
180 Development and Evaluation (GRADE) guideline. The quality of evidence was classified as high  
181 (i.e., further research is unlikely to change our confidence in the effect estimate), moderate (i.e.,  
182 further research is likely to have an important impact on our confidence in the effect estimate), low  
183 (i.e., further research is highly likely to have an important impact on our confidence in the effect

184 estimate), or very low (i.e., any estimate of the effect is highly uncertain).<sup>24,25</sup> Because this review  
185 only included RCTs, evaluation was initiated from the highest quality level. Based on our  
186 independent evaluations, we downgraded the quality of evidence depending on the risk of bias,  
187 inconsistency, indirectness (e.g., generalizability), imprecision (e.g., insufficient data), or  
188 publication bias.<sup>26</sup>

189

### 190 *Statistical synthesis*

191

192 General characteristics for study and participants were extracted and descriptive analysis was  
193 performed on all selected outcomes. Outcome measures of physical functioning were linked to the  
194 ICF categories of body function, activities, and participation by two researchers (AR and JP), and  
195 the ICF categories were used as a tool to capture similar outcomes into meta-analysis or descriptive  
196 analysis.<sup>27,28</sup> Meta-analyses were performed separately for captured outcomes of physical  
197 functioning that were similar if five or more studies reported meaningful data. Additional  
198 subanalyses of used technology were investigated if applicable. If adequate post-treatment values  
199 (mean and standard deviation [SD]) were not reported in the original study, a request was sent to the  
200 corresponding author of this study. The study was excluded from the meta-analysis if no response  
201 was obtained from the corresponding author. If a study reported standard error (SE) values instead  
202 of SD values, SD values were obtained from the SE values of the means by multiplying the SE  
203 values by the square root of the sample size within a group. Standard mean difference (SMD)  
204 between the experimental and control groups was calculated for each study. Mean difference (MD)  
205 was calculated if studies in the same meta-analysis used the same outcome assessment. In  
206 accordance with the Cochrane guidelines for systematic reviews and meta-analysis, values of  
207 outcome were multiplied by -1 if required so that high values reflected better physical functioning.<sup>29</sup>  
208 Meta-analyses were performed using a random-effects model. Pooled effect estimates for a

209 combination of single effects of the RCTs were analyzed using Cochrane Collaboration's Review  
210 Manager 5.3.5 statistical software analysis package. SMD between the groups was classified as  
211 large ( $> 0.5$ ), moderate ( $0.3-0.5$ ), small ( $0.1-0.2$ ) or insubstantial ( $< 0.1$ ).<sup>30</sup> A study was defined as  
212 having a low methodological quality if its score was  $\leq 6$  points according to the Furlan method  
213 guideline. Results of the meta-analyses are presented using forest plots of the SMD or MD.  
214 Statistical heterogeneity was evaluated using  $I^2$  statistic, with a value close to 0 indicating low  
215 heterogeneity.<sup>31</sup> Possible publication bias was investigated using funnel plots.<sup>32</sup>

216

217

## 218 **Results**

219

220 The literature search identified 693 studies after removing duplicate studies. Screening of 162 full-  
221 text studies revealed 13 studies that fulfilled the inclusion criteria, and these studies were included  
222 in quantitative synthesis and descriptive analysis.<sup>33-45</sup> A flow chart of the screening process is  
223 presented in Figure 1, and specific details of the included studies are shown in Table 1. A table with  
224 the used technologies and the communication between the health care professional and the  
225 participant is presented in Appendix 2.

226

### 227 *Description of study participants*

228

229 Selected studies included 605 stroke survivors, of which 304 were included in the experimental  
230 group and 301 were included in the control group (Table 1). The mean (SD) age of the study  
231 participants was 65.2 (4.2) years. Ten out of 13 studies reported an average disease duration since  
232 diagnosis of 10.6 (SD 11.2) months (range,  $\leq 1$  month to 36 months). Of the 605 study participants,  
233 65 % were men and 87 % had experienced ischemic stroke. Four studies did not report the stroke

234 type.<sup>33,35,39,41</sup> Only six studies reported the affected side of hemiparesis, with majority of  
235 participants (53 %) showing left hemiparesis.<sup>33,34,40,42-44</sup> Inclusion criteria of impairment and  
236 disability levels due to a stroke were defined across the included studies with measurements of  
237 independent walking,<sup>33,42</sup> ADL,<sup>18,36,37,39</sup> or upper extremity functioning.<sup>34,35,40,41,43,44</sup> One study did  
238 not report impairment and disability levels as inclusion criteria,<sup>45</sup> and 11 out of 13 studies used  
239 cognitive impairment or psychiatric illness as an exclusion criterion.<sup>33,34,36-42,44,45</sup>

240

#### 241 *Description of technology-based distance physical rehabilitation interventions*

242

243 The most common technology used for providing distance physical rehabilitation interventions was  
244 online video monitoring, which was used in five out of 13 studies.<sup>36,38,39,41,44</sup> Therapists used online  
245 video techniques for monitoring physical home exercises, goal settings, or overall  
246 treatment.<sup>36,38,39,41,44</sup> However, the frequency of this technology in the interventions was  
247 heterogeneous, ranging from three<sup>39,41</sup> to five<sup>36,44</sup> times per week, and one study did not report the  
248 frequency of online video monitoring.<sup>38</sup> Three of these five studies used other technologies  
249 alongside online video monitoring, such as telephone calls and messaging,<sup>39</sup> gamification,<sup>41</sup> or  
250 accelerometer.<sup>36</sup> The second most common technology used for providing distance physical  
251 rehabilitation interventions was telephone calls conducted by a therapist or a nurse, which was used  
252 in three out of 13 studies.<sup>33,37,42</sup> The frequency of telephone calls varied from only three telephone  
253 calls in a six-month study period to one telephone call in a four-week study period.<sup>33,37,42</sup> The  
254 remaining five studies used technologies such as exercise videos through an electronic tablet,<sup>40</sup>  
255 virtual training program for upper extremity functioning,<sup>34,35</sup> exercises from a digital versatile disc  
256 (DVD),<sup>45</sup> or combination of physical exercise programs through the Internet along with  
257 gamification.<sup>43</sup>

258

259 Eight studies reported that healthcare professionals and participants interacted in real-time through  
260 an online video or through telephone calls.<sup>18,33,36,37,39,41,42,44</sup> Only one out of 13 studies used one-  
261 way communication where the therapist monitored physical exercise and provided feedback to  
262 participants if necessary through the Internet without any real-time communication.<sup>43</sup> Four out of 13  
263 studies did not involve any direct communication or self-monitoring options, because they used a  
264 virtual training program without any feedback or exercise videos through an electronic tablet or a  
265 DVD.<sup>34,35,40,45</sup>

266

### 267 *Content of interventions in the experimental group*

268

269 Mean (SD) duration of the interventions was 9.2 (6.0) weeks. The content of the intervention in the  
270 experimental group was very heterogeneous (Table 1). Four out of 13 interventions focused on  
271 overall and individualized physical exercises for improving mobility, strength, balance, walking,  
272 and stretching.<sup>38-40,45</sup> Five out of 13 interventions included only upper extremity exercises  
273 performed in a virtual environment at home,<sup>34,35,44</sup> balance and body position exercises,<sup>41</sup> or use of  
274 orthoses.<sup>43</sup> Two out of 13 interventions focused on lower extremity exercises such as gait-related  
275 exercises with balance and coordination exercises.<sup>33,36</sup> Finally, two out of 13 interventions focused  
276 on increasing and promoting physical activity.<sup>37,42</sup> Twelve out of 13 interventions were monitored  
277 or programmed by a physiotherapist or an occupational therapist, or by both.<sup>33-36,38,39,41-45</sup> Only one  
278 intervention was a nurse-led stroke prevention program for improving physical activity.<sup>37</sup>

279

### 280 *Effectiveness of technology-based distance physical rehabilitation interventions*

281

282 Seven outcomes of physical functioning were identified from the selected studies (Table 1 & Table  
283 2). These outcomes were ADL, upper and lower extremity functioning, balance, walking, physical



284 activity, and participation. Descriptive analysis was performed on all of the outcomes and meta-  
285 analysis was only conducted from ADL, as for other outcomes there were not enough data to  
286 perform meaningful meta-analyses. Metaregression analyses were not performed because of a lack  
287 of studies.

288

289 *ADL*. Nine studies investigated ADL of participants receiving technology-based distance physical  
290 rehabilitation interventions.<sup>34–36,38,39,41,42,45</sup> ADL was measured using six ADL instruments, namely,  
291 the Barthel Index (BI),<sup>34,41</sup> Modified BI,<sup>38,45</sup> Modified Rankin Scale (MRS),<sup>37</sup> telephone version of  
292 the Functional Independence Measure (FONEFIM),<sup>39</sup> ADL domain of Stroke Impact Scale (SIS),<sup>42</sup>  
293 and the Nottingham Extended ADL Scale (NEADL).<sup>35</sup> ADL instruments were identified for  
294 mobility (d4), self-care (d5), and domestic life (d6) in ICF categories of activities and participation.

295

296 A meta-analysis was performed from six studies for ADL outcome.<sup>37–39,41,42,45</sup> Technology-based  
297 distance physical rehabilitation interventions had a similar effect on ADL when compared to control  
298 group with the combination of similar treatment, other treatment, and usual care (SMD 0.06; 95%  
299 CI: -0.22 to 0.35,  $p = .67$ ; Figure 2). Technologies and the content of the interventions in the  
300 experimental group were heterogeneous, with most often used technology being online video  
301 monitoring to enable physical exercises.<sup>38,39,41</sup> The overall results of the meta-analysis indicated that  
302 the included studies were moderately heterogeneous ( $I^2 = 38\%$ ). Subanalysis of different  
303 technologies did not show differences between the groups, but within one technology group there  
304 were no heterogeneity observed (Figure 2) Funnel plot did not indicate any publication bias  
305 (Appendix 3). Descriptive analysis from all studies indicated similar findings as in the meta-  
306 analysis regardless of the used technology or comparison group (Table 2).

307

308 *Upper extremity functioning.* Seven studies investigated upper extremity functioning of participants  
309 receiving technology-based distance physical rehabilitation interventions through online video  
310 monitoring,<sup>36,39,44</sup> exercise videos,<sup>40</sup> virtual reality training or its combination with gamification  
311 (i.e., any game-design elements improving physical functioning),<sup>34,35</sup> or the combination of  
312 monitoring through Internet and gamification<sup>43</sup> (Table 1). Outcomes of upper extremity functioning  
313 were determined using the Late-Life Function and Disability Instrument (LLFDI),<sup>39</sup> the Fugl-Meyer  
314 Assessment (FMA),<sup>34,43,44</sup> or the Wolf Motor Function Test.<sup>35,40</sup> Outcomes of upper extremity  
315 functioning were interpreted for neuromusculoskeletal- and movement-related functions (b7) in the  
316 ICF category of body function or for mobility (d4) in the ICF categories of activities and  
317 participation, depending on whether the instrument focused only on motor function or on functional  
318 capacity. Descriptive analysis revealed similar effects between technology-based distance physical  
319 rehabilitation interventions and control groups with combination of usual care<sup>34,35,39,43,44</sup> or similar  
320 treatment without the use of technology<sup>40</sup> (Table 2).

321  
322 *Lower extremity functioning.* Only two studies investigated lower extremity functioning using lower  
323 extremity domains of LLFDI<sup>36</sup> or FMA<sup>39</sup>. Both studies instructed physical exercises such as balance  
324 and gait-related physical exercises through telerehabilitation (Table 1). Similar as in upper  
325 extremity functioning, instruments assessing lower extremity functioning were interpreted for  
326 neuromusculoskeletal- and movement-related functions (b7) in the ICF category of body function  
327 and for mobility (d4) in the ICF categories of activities and participation. Descriptive analysis  
328 indicated that technology-based distance physical rehabilitation enabled through telerehabilitation  
329 had the similar effect on lower extremity functioning when compared with usual care (Table 2).<sup>36,39</sup>

330  
331 *Balance.* Balance was assessed in four technology-based distance physical rehabilitation  
332 interventions that were enabled through online video monitoring<sup>36,38,41</sup> or telephone calls.<sup>42</sup> All of

333 these four studies used the Berg Balance Scale (BBS) as an outcome for balance,<sup>18,36,41,42</sup> but only  
334 three of them reported BBS values. BBS was linked to the domain of mobility (d4) in the ICF  
335 categories of activities and participation. Descriptive analysis showed that technology-based  
336 distance physical rehabilitation interventions had a similar effect on balance when compared to  
337 control group with the combination of usual care, similar or other treatment (Table 2).

338  
339 *Walking.* Outcomes of walking was assessed in three studies that compared telephone-enabled  
340 distance physical rehabilitation interventions with other treatments (Table 2). Walking tests were  
341 performed using a 10-meter walking test.<sup>33,36,42</sup> Walking was linked to the domain of mobility (d4)  
342 in the ICF categories of activities and participation. Descriptive analysis showed that two of these  
343 three studies had a better improvement on walking ability for participants in the control group  
344 receiving either supervised clinic-based treadmill training<sup>33</sup> or leisure-center exercise training<sup>42</sup>  
345 compared to technology-based distance physical rehabilitation interventions offering home-based  
346 exercises that were monitored through telephone calls. However, Van den Berg et al. (2016) study  
347 found similar effect between groups when distance physical rehabilitation interventions enabled by  
348 home-based physical exercises through online video monitoring and smartphone application were  
349 compared with usual care (Table 2).

350  
351 *Physical activity.* Only two studies investigated physical activity on the effectiveness of technology-  
352 based physical rehabilitation interventions to either other treatments<sup>42</sup> or physical activity health  
353 promotion for nurse-led secondary prevention of ischemic stroke.<sup>37</sup> Physical activity was  
354 investigated using the physical activity subscales in SIS<sup>42</sup> and Health Promoting Lifestyle Profile  
355 II.<sup>37</sup> We identified physical activity in the domain of self-care (d5) in the ICF categories of activities  
356 and participation. Both studies showed similar effects between the groups with respect to the  
357 outcomes of physical activity when compared to usual care and other treatments (Table 2).<sup>37,42</sup>

358

359 *Participation.* Four studies investigated participation in technology-based physical rehabilitation  
360 interventions enabled through telephone calls (three studies) and website exercises (one study)  
361 compared usual care<sup>36,39,43</sup> or other treatment.<sup>42</sup> Studies captured the outcome of participation with  
362 either the Stroke Impact Scale (SIS)<sup>36,42,43</sup> or LLFDI.<sup>39</sup> The instruments of participation were  
363 identified for mobility (d4), self-care (d5), and domestic life (d6) in ICF categories of activities and  
364 participation (Table 2). All studies indicated similar effect on participation between the  
365 experimental group compared and usual care<sup>36,39,43</sup> or other treatment (i.e., supervised leisure-center  
366 exercise classes for people with stroke).<sup>42</sup>

367

368 *Methodological quality and quality of evidence*

369

370 The overall methodological quality of the studies was low (median: 6, interquartile range: 6 to 9)  
371 according to the Furlan method guideline (Table 3).<sup>23</sup> The methodological quality was high (> 9/13)  
372 in four studies,<sup>33,36,40,42</sup> moderate (7-8/13) in two studies,<sup>38,39</sup> and low ( $\leq$  6/13) in seven  
373 studies.<sup>34,35,37,41,43-45</sup> All studies used an adequate randomization method. However, only 38 %  
374 studies reported an adequate treatment allocation procedure. Other main methodological faults were  
375 observed in the blinding of participants and care providers, reporting of information on selective  
376 outcomes, and compliance to the intervention. Moreover, only three studies used intention-to-treat  
377 analysis.<sup>36,39,41</sup>

378

379 GRADE evaluation was performed using the results of the meta-analysis and descriptive analyses  
380 (Table 4).<sup>26</sup> All the outcomes indicated very low quality of evidence. For ADL, downgrading three  
381 levels were based on the methodological quality of the studies (risk of bias), clinical heterogeneity  
382 (inconsistency), and low number of participants included in the meta-analysis (imprecision). Similar

383 observations were obtained for other outcomes, but only based on descriptive analysis, as meta-  
384 analyses were not able to perform due to lack of meaningful data.

385

## 386 **Discussion**

387

388 This systematic review investigated the effectiveness of technology-based distance physical  
389 rehabilitation interventions for improving physical functioning in persons with stroke. Results  
390 indicated that technology-based distance physical rehabilitation interventions had a similar effect on  
391 physical functioning outcomes of ADL, upper and lower extremity functioning, balance, physical  
392 activity, and participation, when compared to the combinations of traditional treatments not  
393 involving the use of technology (i.e., similar treatment, other treatment, and usual care). Our  
394 findings are consistent with previous systematic reviews that assessed the effectiveness of  
395 telerehabilitation in persons with stroke, which reported no significant difference in the  
396 improvement of physical functioning between participants receiving telerehabilitation and those  
397 receiving traditional treatments.<sup>17-19</sup> However, our study focused only on physical rehabilitation  
398 interventions with no technology allowed in the comparison group.

399

400 Our meta-analysis involving six studies and 322 stroke survivors showed similar effect of  
401 technology-based distance physical rehabilitation interventions on ADL compared to the  
402 combination of similar treatment, other treatment, and usual care. ADL improved in both the groups  
403 irrespective of the intervention or used technology, which was consistent with previous systematic  
404 reviews that investigated all types of telerehabilitation interventions when compared to traditional  
405 therapies in stroke.<sup>17,18</sup> Results of our meta-analysis indicated a moderate statistical heterogeneity,  
406 which our analysis did not encompass for meta-regression due to lack of studies. Once more studies  
407 are published in this field, we might be able to investigate more specific factors that might enhance

408 clinical and statistical heterogeneity, such as personal and clinical characteristics, comparison of  
409 different control groups (i.e., usual care, similar, or other treatment), or more wide comparison of  
410 different technologies.

411

412 Our findings showed inconsistent findings on walking. Two out of three studies showed better  
413 improvement on walking for participants who received telephone-based distance physical  
414 rehabilitation interventions providing home-based exercises compared to participants receiving  
415 supervised clinic-based treadmill training<sup>33</sup> or leisure-center exercise training.<sup>42</sup> Third study found  
416 no differences between the groups, when distance physical rehabilitation interventions were  
417 instructed through online video monitoring and smartphone application compared with usual care.<sup>36</sup>  
418 Evidence of using technology-based physical rehabilitation interventions are still scarce in the  
419 research field. However, our findings could indicate that when aiming to improve walking ability in  
420 stroke, distance physical rehabilitation might not be an alternative option for stroke survivors. For  
421 other physical functioning outcomes (i.e., upper and lower extremity, balance, physical activity, and  
422 participation), our descriptive analyses indicated similar effects between technology-based distance  
423 physical rehabilitation interventions and the combination of traditional treatments. Unfortunately,  
424 we were not able to perform meaningful with meta-analyses from these outcomes due to lack of  
425 studies and insufficient data. In previous systematic review with meta-analysis, only two studies  
426 showed similar results on upper extremity functioning and balance, when all types of  
427 telerehabilitation interventions were compared with traditional treatments in stroke.<sup>18</sup> Although our  
428 review was able to solely focus on physical rehabilitation interventions, more evidence is warranted  
429 on different technologies and their possible additional values over traditional physiotherapy or other  
430 forms of physical rehabilitation when only similar treatments are compared with the distinction only  
431 on the use of technology.

432

433 The overall methodological quality and the quality of evidence of the included studies were low.  
434 The included RCTs had main insufficient methodological quality for treatment allocation  
435 procedures, blinding of the participants and care providers, selection bias, prevention of co-  
436 interventions, and reporting of intervention compliance. The difficulty in blinding care providers or  
437 participants in these study types is understandable. Moreover, it may be difficult to prevent co-  
438 interventions completely, especially in the early stage of recovery among persons with stroke.  
439 Surprisingly, there was a lack of quality in reporting compliance to interventions. Guidelines such  
440 as CONSORT 2010 Statement for reporting a RCT study are strongly recommended to increase  
441 transparency and methodological quality of a single RCT study.<sup>46</sup> GRADE evaluation showed also  
442 low quality of evidence, suggesting that the confidence in the effect estimates was low and that  
443 future studies may substantially change the effect estimates.

444

445 Twelve out of 13 studies reported inclusion criteria of low or intermediate physical disability based  
446 on a measure of walking ability, upper extremity functioning, or overall physical functioning and no  
447 cognitive deficit at baseline.<sup>33-45</sup> Majority of participants were male with a mean age of 65 years,  
448 had a disease duration of 11 months and 87 % of the participants experienced ischemic stroke.  
449 These demographic and clinical characteristics suggest that our results can be generalized to elderly  
450 male stroke survivors in the subacute stage of a recovery with no cognitive impairment, and who  
451 can function independently at least in some levels of their daily life. Approximately from 50 % to  
452 75 % of new stroke survivors develop some level of cognitive impairment.<sup>47,48</sup> From this  
453 perspective, the use of technology for providing distance rehabilitation interventions in persons with  
454 stroke may not always be suitable, due to the presence of cognitive impairment. Therefore,  
455 technology-based distance physical rehabilitation interventions are important to develop towards  
456 more stroke-specific, individualized, and user-friendly approaches to recognize who would benefit  
457 from the technology approach when focus is to improve physical functioning in daily life.

458

459 In this systematic review, technology-based distance physical rehabilitation interventions were  
460 defined as interventions that used one or more technological devices in a remote guidance of a  
461 healthcare professional, mainly monitored by a physiotherapist. Eight included studies used real-  
462 time communication through online video monitoring or telephone calls. However, the included  
463 studies used different technologies or a combination of several technologies using different  
464 interaction methods, thus making it difficult to determine the advantage of a single interaction  
465 approach. Our review also indicated that there is a lack of evidence on the effectiveness of  
466 technology-based distance physical rehabilitation interventions in stroke rehabilitation, and the  
467 current use of technology and its communication method is scarce in the research field. Future  
468 studies are recommended to narrow this gap to understand the benefits of either a single technology  
469 or a single interactive method (e.g., self-monitoring vs. interactive communication) enabled through  
470 a technology device in a distance physical rehabilitation intervention.

471

472 To understand the benefits of using technology in physical rehabilitation interventions, one must  
473 understand its benefits in terms of resource utilization and cost-effectiveness.<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately, our  
474 systematic review did not observe any indication of these approaches in the included studies, which  
475 was consistent with that observed in previous similar systematic reviews.<sup>17-19,49-51</sup> These aspects are  
476 crucial for understanding whether technology-driven distance rehabilitation interventions are  
477 beneficial for the healthcare system without overlooking the meaningful and goal-orientated  
478 rehabilitation of persons with stroke. Therefore, future studies should also focus on the resource  
479 utilization and cost-effectiveness of technology-based distance physical rehabilitation interventions  
480 compared with traditional or similar treatments.

481

482 *Study strengths and limitations*



483

484 The strength of this systematic review and meta-analysis is its focus on technology-based distance  
485 physical rehabilitation in persons with stroke, as previous systematic reviews have mainly focused  
486 on telerehabilitation.<sup>17-19</sup> In this review, we strictly followed the inclusion criteria based on the  
487 PICOS framework to determine the effect of technology-based distance physical rehabilitation  
488 interventions in persons with stroke. We only included studies that used technology-based distance  
489 physical rehabilitation setting in one intervention group that were administered in the physical  
490 absence of a healthcare professional compared to a group that did not use any technology.

491

492 However, this systematic review has some limitations. The studies included in our review were  
493 heterogeneous with respect to the content of treatments in participants in the experimental and  
494 control groups. Heterogeneity was also reported in previous reviews assessing technology-based  
495 distance rehabilitation interventions.<sup>49-51</sup> Moreover, substantial variability was observed in  
496 technologies in the distance physical rehabilitation interventions. Because of these reasons, the  
497 results of this systematic review should be interpreted with caution. Nevertheless, this systematic  
498 review provides overview on the type of technologies used to enable distance physical rehabilitation  
499 interventions for improving physical functioning in stroke survivors, and hopefully, encourages  
500 researchers to conduct more studies in this field.

501

## 502 **Conclusions**

503

504 This systematic review suggests that the effectiveness of technology-based distance physical  
505 rehabilitation for improving ADL, upper and lower extremity functioning, balance, physical  
506 activity, and participation is similar compared to the traditional treatments in persons with stroke.  
507 Contradictory findings were observed for walking. Further research should be performed to confirm

508 the effectiveness of technology-based distance physical rehabilitation interventions for improving  
509 physical functioning of persons with stroke.

510

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661

ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT



662 **Figure legends**

663 Figure 1. Flow chart of study selection

664 Figure 2. Meta-analysis and additional sensitivity analysis on ADL compared to control group of  
665 similar or other treatment, and usual care without the use of technology. The squares and diamonds  
666 represent the test values for individual studies and overall effectiveness; standard mean difference  
667 with 95% confidence interval (CI). Footnotes: SD, standard deviation; MBI, Modified Barthel  
668 Index; MRS, Modified Rankin Scale; SIS, Stroke Impact Scale; ADL, activities of daily living;  
669 FONEFIM, the telephone version of Functional Independence Measure; df, degrees of freedom

670 Appendix 1: Examples of the search strategies per database.

671 Appendix 2: Summary of included RCT studies on the used technologies and its communicative  
672 interactions thereof in the distance physical rehabilitation interventions.

673 Appendix 3. Funnel plot of activities of daily living.

Table 1: Summary of RCTs on technology-based distance physical rehabilitation interventions with outcomes related to physical functioning compared to similar or other treatment, and usual care without the use of technology in stroke.

Study / Year / Country	Duration	Total N (% men)	Experimental N (% men)	Control N (% men)	Age (years) Experimental/Control	Participants	Intervention in the experimental group	Intervention in the control group	Outcomes
Ada et al. 2003* Australia	4 weeks, FU 12 weeks	27 (70)	13 (69)	14 (71)	66/66	Persons with stroke from general community	Clinic-based treadmill and over-ground walking 3 x week à 45 minutes supervised by a physiotherapist	Home-based exercise program for lower limb muscles, balance, and coordination.  Telephone calls once a week with a physiotherapist (total 4x).	10-meter walking test
Ballester et al. 2017 Spain	3 weeks, FU 12 weeks	35 (40)	17 (47)	18 (33)	65/62	Outpatients with stroke from a clinical hospital	Home-based non-supervised Automated Evaluation of Motor Function (AEMF) – virtual training program for the assessment of upper-limb motor functioning.  Training comprised 3 tasks: Hit, Grasp, and Place, with a total duration of 20 minutes per training.	Usual care of home-based non-supervised upper extremity functioning tasks without the technology	Fugl-Meyer Assessment  Barthel Index

							Occupational therapists did not give any explicit feedback about the performance during the intervention.		
Chen et al. 2017 China	12 weeks, FU 12 weeks	54 (61)	27 (67)	27 (56)	66/66	Persons with stroke as outpatients	Home-based telesupervising rehabilitation including physical exercises and ETNS.  Physical exercises included stretching, motor imagery therapy, balance exercises, and walking exercises for 1 hour twice a day (total 60 sessions) with ETNS for 20 minutes twice a day for 12 weeks (total 60 sessions).  Therapists supervised the participants to do the physical exercises and ETNS by live video conferencing.	Similar physical exercises and ETNS program without telesupervising	Modified Barthel Index  Berg Balance Scale
Chumbler et al. 2012 United States	12 weeks, FU 12 weeks	48 (98)	25 (96)	23 (100)	67/68	Persons with stroke from Veterans Affairs facility center	Multifaceted stroke telerehabilitation intervention to improve functional mobility including individual strength and balance exercises, goal settings, and	Usual care	The Telephone Version of the Functional Independence Measure (FONEFIM)

							treatment plan.		Late-Life Function & Disability Instrument
Emmerson et al. 2017 Australia	4 weeks, no FU	62 (63)	30 (61)	32 (63)	68/63	Persons with stroke from general community	<p>Three home video televisits remotely with a teletherapist (physical or occupational therapist) with the help of an assistant at home, five telephone calls, and in-home messaging device between patients and teletherapists.</p> <p>Home exercise program as video format on an electronic tablet (iPad) with automated reminders.</p> <p>Home exercise program consisted exercises of stretching, range of movement, strength, and fine motor and coordination for 1-2x per day designed by occupational therapists who updated the videos throughout the programme.</p> <p>All participants completed their usual individual and/or group therapy throughout the intervention.</p>	Similar home exercise program without technology (paper-based). <p>All participants completed their usual individual and/or group therapy throughout the intervention.</p>	Wolf Motor Function Test
Lin et al. 2014	4	24	12	12	75/76	Persons with	An online web-based	Usual care	Berg Balance

Taiwan	weeks, no FU	(71)	(83)	(58)		stroke living in long-term care facilities	telerehabilitation program monitoring the change of body position, standing exercises, environment, and the use of upper extremities including animated videos and interactive gaming.  The physiotherapist could monitor the sequences and durations with light to moderate exercise intensity (Borg scale 12–14).  3x per week à 50 min for each session, online video monitoring.		Scale  Barthel Index
Moore et al. 2015* United Kingdom	19 weeks, no FU	40 (85)	20 (90)	20 (80)	68/70	Persons with stroke from a general community	Supervised leisure-center classes run by a physiotherapist and physical activity instructor for 3x per week à 45-60 minutes.  Exercises were targeted to increase functional movement (strength, balance, cardiovascular).	Matched-duration home stretching program with instructions for using a booklet and diary to record stretches and changes in medication, diet, and physical activity.  Telephone calls every 2 weeks (total	10-meter walking test  Berg Balance Scale  Stroke Impact Scale

								10x).	
Nijenhuis et al. 2017 The Netherlands	6 weeks, FU 8 weeks	19 (53)	9 (78)	10 (30)	58/62	Persons with chronic stroke from rehabilitation center and regional hospitals	Self-administered home-based arm and hand training for 6x per week à 30 minutes, using either a passive dynamic wrist or a hand orthosis combined with computerized gaming exercises designed by a therapist.  Therapists monitored progress without real-time supervision, and adjusted training programs remotely via a website.	Prescribed conventional exercises from an exercise book	Fugl-Meyer Assessment  Stroke Impact Scale
Piron et al. 2009 Italy	4 weeks, FU 4 weeks	36 (58)	18 (61)	18 (56)	66/64	Persons with stroke as outpatients	Home-based telerehabilitation program consisting of a virtual environment where a patient conducted motor tasks for upper extremities, coupled with a videoconference tool provided by a physiotherapist for 5 times per week à 60 minutes.  Therapist provided real-time feedback to the patient through the videoconferencing system.	Usual care	Fugl-Meyer Assessment

Redzuan et al. 2012 Malaysia	12 weeks, no FU	90 (58)	44 (40)	46 (60)	64/59	Persons with sub-acute stroke	Home-based audiovisual DVD including 45-minute self-instructional therapy with 6 sections: 1) positioning and handling; 2) bed mobility; 3-4) movement, stretching, and strengthening exercises for lower and upper limbs; 5) transfer techniques; and 6) activities of daily living.  Content of the DVD was reviewed by physiotherapists, an occupational therapist, and a rehabilitation physician.  Additional therapy twice- monthly.	Usual care for weekly therapy (1h/week)	Modified Barthel Index
Standen et al. 2017 United Kingdom	8	27 (64)	17 (47)	10 (80)	59/63	Stroke patients	Home-based virtual reality training employing infra-red capture to translate the position of the hand into game play (Nintendo Wii) for 20min/ 3x per day.	Usual care	Nottingham Extended Activities of Daily Living Scale  Wolf Motor Function Test
Van den Berg et al. 2016	8 weeks,	63 (64)	31 (66)	32 (61)	65/70	Stroke patients and	Telerehabilitation comprised of a caregiver-mediated	Usual care	10-meter walking test

The Netherlands	FU 4 weeks					their caregivers	<p>training program with a support of a customized exercise application loaded into a tablet.</p> <p>Exercises for the patients included gait and gait-related mobility such as standing, turning, or making transfers for 5 times per week à 30 minutes.</p> <p>Telerehabilitation was conducted via the exercise application and videoconferencing to provide access to the treating physiotherapist. Therapists also had weekly home visits.</p> <p>Patients also wore an activity monitor (the Fitbit Zip) to increase physical activity through real-time feedback.</p>		<p>Stroke Impact Scale</p> <p>Berg Balance Scale</p> <p>Barthel Index</p> <p>Fugl-Meyer Assessment</p>
Wan et al. 2016 China	24 weeks, no FU	80 (71)	40 (75)	40 (68)	59/60	Persons with stroke as outpatients	<p>Nurse-lead telephone call intervention for secondary prevention of ischemic stroke.</p> <p>Three telephone follow-up calls at week 1 and at months 1 and 3 after discharge, (à</p>	Usual stroke education for secondary prevention	<p>The Health Promoting Lifestyle Profile II</p> <p>Modified Rankin Scale</p>



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15-20 minutes) to promote self-management techniques and maintenance of behavioral improvements.

Physical activity guideline of moderate to intense exercise 3-5 days per week à 30 minutes.

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FU, follow-up; ENTS, electromyography-triggered neuromuscular stimulation; DVD, digital versatile disc

Table 2: Results of outcome variables concerning technology-based distance physical rehabilitation interventions on physical functioning in stroke

Study, year, and outcome	Experimental			Control		Group differences at end-point (Effect / Effect size)	Group differences at end-point p-value (95% CI)
	n	M1 mean (SD)	M2 mean (SD)	n	M1 mean (SD)		
<b>ADL</b>							
Ballester et al. 2017	17			18			
Barthel Index, (0-100)		89.5 (9.4)	Not rep.		84.7 (14.2)	Not rep.	ES = -0.41 .44
Chen et al. 2017	27			27			
Modified Barthel Index, (0-100)		55.6 (12.8)	61.4 (12.9)		54.3 (13.4)	59.8 (12.3)	F = 0.11 .90*
Chumbler et al. 2012	22			22			
FONEFIM, (18-126)		83.5 (9.5)	82.7 (9.7)		81.5 (12.1)	79.0 (15.0)	- .31*
Lin et al. 2014	12			12			
Barthel Index, (0-100)		52.9 (32.9)	57.9 (3.1)		57.9 (26.7)	60.8 (22.5)	- .45 <sup>‡</sup>
Moore et al. 2015 <sup>†</sup>	20			20			
Stroke Impact Scale, ADL (0-100)		82.0 (19.0)	85.0 (25.0)		90.0 (17.0)	90.0 (15.0)	- .39* (-3.0 to 8.0)
Redzuan et al. 2012	44			46			
Modified Barthel Index, (0-100)		46.7 (22.3)	78.8 (20.2)		61.3 (24.3)	86.6 (16.3)	- Not rep.
Van den Berg et al. 2016	31			32			
Barthel Index, (0-100)		Not rep.	Not rep.		Not rep.	Not rep.	- .38
Wan et al. 2016	40			40			
Modified Rankin Scale, (0-3)		0.60 (1.0)	0.18 (0.5)		0.70 (1.1)	0.40 (0.7)	F = 0.52 .56*
<b>BALANCE</b>							
Chen et al. 2017	27			27			

Berg Balance Scale, (0-56)	33.1 (4.0)	37.0 (3.8)	31.7 (5.9)	36.1 (5.3)	F = 1.42	.91*
Lin et al. 2014	12		12			
Berg Balance Scale, (0-56)	20.4 (17.0)	24.6 (18.4)	22.4 (18.4)	26.9 (18.0)	-	.83 <sup>‡</sup>
Moore et al. 2015 <sup>†</sup>	20		20			
Berg Balance Scale, (0-56)	50.0 (4.0)	55.0 (2.0)	50.0 (5.6)	52.0 (5.0)	-	<.01* (0.9 to 5.0)
<b>UPPER EXTREMITY FUNCTIONING</b>						
Ballester et al. 2017	17		18			
Fugl-Meyer Assessment, UE (0-66)	42.9 (14.4)	Not rep.	43.4 (13.5)	Not rep.	ES = -0.30	.33
Chumbler et al. 2012	22		22			
Late-Life Function & Disability Instrument, UE (0-100)	64.7 (21.2)	70.1 (19.4)	65.6 (17.2)	64.1 (17.8)	-	.43*
Emmerson et al. 2017	28		30			
Wolf Motor Function Test, (s)	39.0 (44.0)	33.0 (37.0)	49.0 (47.0)	45.0 (44.0)	-	.10 (-11.0 to 1.0)
Nijenhuis et al. 2017	9		10			
Fugl-Meyer Assessment, UE (0-66)	33.0 (20.1)	34.2 (19.9)	32.9 (14.9)	34.9 (15.7)	-	> .05
Piron et al. 2009	18		18			
Fugl-Meyer Assessment, UE (0-66)	48.5 (7.8)	53.6 (7.7)	47.3 (4.6)	49.5 (4.8)	-	Not rep.
Standen et al. 2017	9		9			
Wolf Motor Function Test, (s)	Not rep.	Not rep.	Not rep.	Not rep.	-	Not rep.
<b>LOWER EXTREMITY FUNCTIONING</b>						
Chumbler et al. 2012	22		22			
Late-Life Function & Disability Instrument, advanced LE (0-100)	32.5 (19.0)	40.7 (20.6)	37.9 (17.4)	35.2 (17.8)	-	.20*
Van den Berg et al. 2016	31		32			
Fugl-Meyer Assessment, LE (0-66)	Not rep.	Not rep.	Not rep.	Not rep.	-	.07

WALKING						
Ada et al. 2003 <sup>†</sup>	11		14			
10-meter walking test, (m/s)		0.62 (0.24)	0.75 (0.26)	0.53 (0.30)	0.56 (0.30)	F = 6.53 .02
Moore et al. 2015 <sup>†</sup>	20		20			
10-meter walking test, (m/s)		1.2 (0.4)	1.5 (0.3)	1.2 (0.3)	1.3 (0.3)	- < .01* (0.1 to 0.3)
Van den Berg et al. 2016	31		32			
10-meter walking test, (m/s)		Not rep.	Not rep.	Not rep.	Not rep.	- .87
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY						
Moore et al. 2015 <sup>†</sup>	20		20			
Stroke Impact Scale-16, physical total (0-400)		308.0 (92.0)	324.0 (96.0)	336.0 (78.0)	348.0 (64.0)	- .67* (-15.0 to 24.0)
Wan et al. 2016	40		40			
Health Promoting Lifestyle Profile II, physical activity (1-4)		1.7 (0.7)	2.3 (0.7)	1.8 (0.7)	2.2 (0.7)	F = 0.54 .47*
PARTICIPATION						
Moore et al. 2015 <sup>†</sup>	20		20			
Stroke Impact Scale, participation (0-100)		72.0 (29.0)	76.0 (28.0)	89.0 (18.0)	89.0 (18.0)	- .31* (-7.0 to 21.0)
Chumbler et al. 2012	22		22			
Late-Life Function & Disability Instrument, overall function (0-100)						
Nijenhuis et al. 2017	9		10			
Stroke Impact Scale, participation (0-100)		57.3 (13.0)	58.9 (11.5)	66.7 (16.0)	67.9 (14.6)	- > .05
Van den Berg et al. 2016	31		32			

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Stroke Impact Scale, participation (0-100)	Not rep.	Not rep.	Not rep.	Not rep.	-	.49
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n, study sample; M1, baseline value; SD, standard deviation; M2, post intervention end-point value; p, p-value; 95%CI, 95% Confidential Interval; s, seconds; m/s, meter per second; F, F-statistics; ADL, Activities of daily living; FONEFIM, The telephone version of the Functional Independence Measure; UE = upper extremity; LE = lower extremity; \*, group x time effect; †, control group was treated as experimental group due to using technology-based distance physical rehabilitation intervention; ‡, training x group effect; Not rep., study did not report the values

Table 3: Methodological quality assessment of included RCTs concerning technology-based distance physical rehabilitation interventions on physical functioning in stroke

Study and year	1: randomization method adequate	2: treatment allocation concealed	3: blinding of participants	4: blinding of care provider	5: blinding of outcome assessor	6: drop-outs described and acceptable	7: participants analyzed in the allocated groups	8: free of suggestion of selective outcome reporting	9: group similarity at the baseline	10: co-intervention avoided or similar	11: compliance	12: similar timing of the outcome assessment	13: other sources of potential bias unlikely	Number of "yes" scores (maximum of 13)*
Ada et al. 2013	Yes	Yes	No	?	Yes	Yes	Yes	?	Yes	?	Yes	Yes	Yes	9
Ballester et al. 2017	Yes	?	No	?	?	?	No	?	Yes	?	Yes	Yes	?	4
Chen et al. 2017	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	?	Yes	Yes	?	Yes	Yes	8
Chumbler et al. 2012	Yes	?	No	?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	?	Yes	Yes	8
Emmerson et al. 2017	Yes	Yes	No	?	Yes	Yes	Yes	?	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	9
Lin et al. 2014	Yes	?	No	?	Yes	Yes	Yes	?	Yes	No	?	?	Yes	6
Moore et al. 2015	Yes	Yes	No	?	Yes	Yes	Yes	?	Yes	?	Yes	Yes	Yes	9
Nijenhuis et al. 2017	Yes	?	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	?	No	No	?	Yes	Yes	5
Piron et al. 2009	Yes	?	No	?	Yes	Yes	Yes	?	Yes	No	?	Yes	?	6
Redzuan et al. 2012	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	?	No	No	?	Yes	Yes	4
Standen et al. 2017	Yes	Yes	No	?	Yes	No	No	?	?	No	?	Yes	Yes	5

Van den Berg et al. 2016	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	9
Wan et al. 2016	Yes	?	No	?	Yes	Yes	Yes	?	Yes	No	?	Yes	?	6

\*, the methodological quality of the studies was assessed with Furlan method guideline<sup>25</sup> including 13 items (1–13) rated as positive ("yes"), negative ("no"), or not fulfilled/unsure ("?").

Table 4: Quality of evidence in technology-based distance physical rehabilitation interventions on physical functioning in stroke

Technology-based distance physical rehabilitation							
Patient or population: persons with stroke receiving distance physical rehabilitation							
Settings: home or rehabilitation care facilities without the present of a healthcare professional							
Intervention: technology-based distance physical rehabilitation							
Outcomes and number of studies	Risk of bias	Inconsistency	Indirectness	Imprecision	Publication bias	Quality of the evidence (GRADE)*	Comments
ADL Nine studies	Study quality by Furlan et al. (2015) 8/13 (moderate)  Sufficient information on treatment allocation procedure only in two studies  Only 2 studies used ITT analysis	Analysis consisted of subjective and objective ADL measures  ADL measures varied (BI, FONEFIM, MBI, MRS, SIS/ADL, NEADL)  Technology varied between DVD, video monitoring, virtual training with gamification, or telephone calls  Control group	Stroke survivors with age range of 63 to 75  Mild to moderate physical disability without cognitive deficits	Meta-analysis of six studies with sample size ranging of 24–88 participants (N = 332) indicated no differences  Qualitative synthesis indicated no differences	No publication bias observed in meta-analysis (Appendix 2)	⊕000	Methodological quality indicated somewhat risk of bias  Clinical heterogeneity observed in the use of technology and in the treatments in control group  Sample size < 400  Only focusing on more elderly persons with stroke with mild impairments without cognitive deficits





							Only focusing on more elderly persons with stroke with mild impairments without cognitive deficits
Upper extremity functioning	Study quality by Furlan et al. (2015) 7/13 (moderate)	Analysis consisted of objective measures	Stroke survivors with age range of 60 to 75	Sample size ranged from 19–58 participants	-	⊕○○○	Methodological quality of the studies indicated somewhat risk of bias
Five studies	Treatment allocation procedure reported sufficiently only in one study	Technology varied from virtual training with gamification, video online monitoring, video online monitoring combined with gamification, or video exercises without monitoring	Mild to moderate physical impairments without cognitive deficits	Qualitative synthesis indicated no differences			Clinical heterogeneity observed in the use of technology and in the treatments in the control group
	Only one study used ITT analysis	Control group were heterogeneous with similar treatment or					Subanalysis to assess clinical heterogeneity were not able to perform due to the lack of studies
							Sample size < 400
							Only focusing on more elderly persons with stroke

		usual care					with mild impairments without cognitive deficits
Lower extremity functioning	Quality of the study by Furlan et al. (2015) 9/13 (high)	Analysis consisted of objective measures	Stroke survivors with age of 67 years	Sample size N = 48 N = 63	-	⊕000	Methodological quality of the studies indicated somewhat risk of bias
Two studies	Treatment allocation procedure reported sufficiently only in one study	Technology varied from virtual training with gamification, video online monitoring, video online monitoring combined with gamification, or video exercises without monitoring	Mild to moderate physical impairments without cognitive deficits	Not enough reported values to conduct meta-analysis Qualitative synthesis indicated no differences			Clinical heterogeneity observed in the use of technology Sample size in total < 400 Only focusing on elderly persons with stroke with mild impairments without cognitive deficits
Walking	Quality of the study by Furlan et al. (2015) 9/13 (high)	Analysis consisted of objective measures	Stroke survivors with age of 60 and 69 years	Sample size N = 40 N = 80	-	⊕000	Clinical heterogeneity observed in the compared treatments of control groups
Three studies		Technology	Mild to	Not enough			

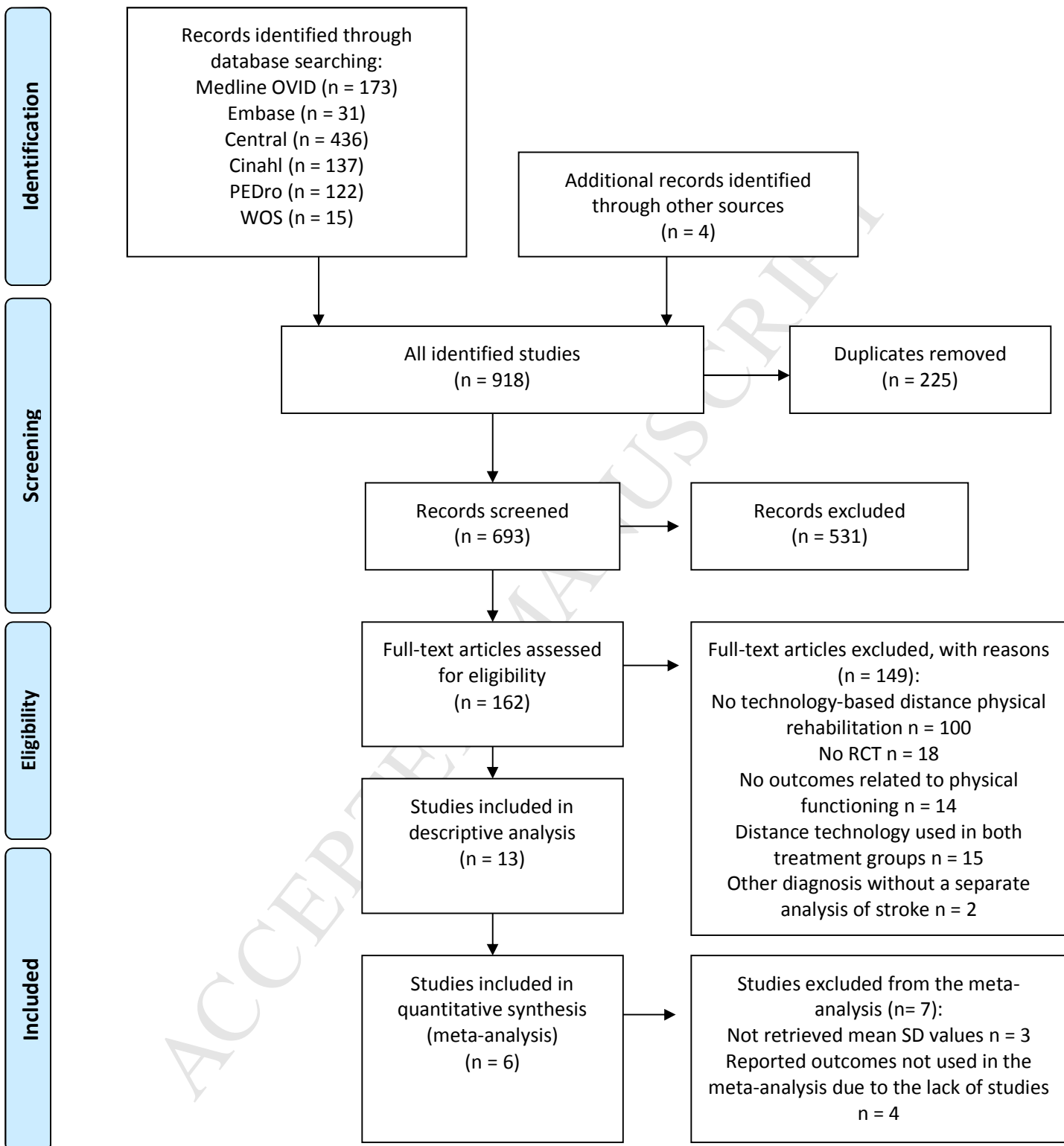
	Treatment allocation procedure reported sufficiently in all studies	used in the experimental groups were only telephone calls  Control group consisted of usual care (one study) or other treatments (2 studies)	moderate physical impairments without cognitive deficits	reported values to conduct meta-analysis  Qualitative synthesis indicated no differences			Sample size in total < 400  Only focusing on elderly persons with stroke with mild impairments without cognitive deficits
Physical activity  Two studies	Quality of the study by Furlan et al. (2015) 8/13 (moderate)  Treatment allocation procedure reported sufficiently only in one study	Analysis consisted of subjective measures  Technology used in the experimental groups were only telephone calls  Control group consisted of usual care (one study) or other treatments (1 study)	Stroke survivors with age between 63 and 69 years  Mild to moderate physical impairments without cognitive deficits	Not enough studies to conduct meta-analysis	-	⊕○○○	Clinical heterogeneity observed in the compared treatments of control groups  Sample size in total < 400  Only focusing on elderly persons with stroke with mild impairments without cognitive deficits

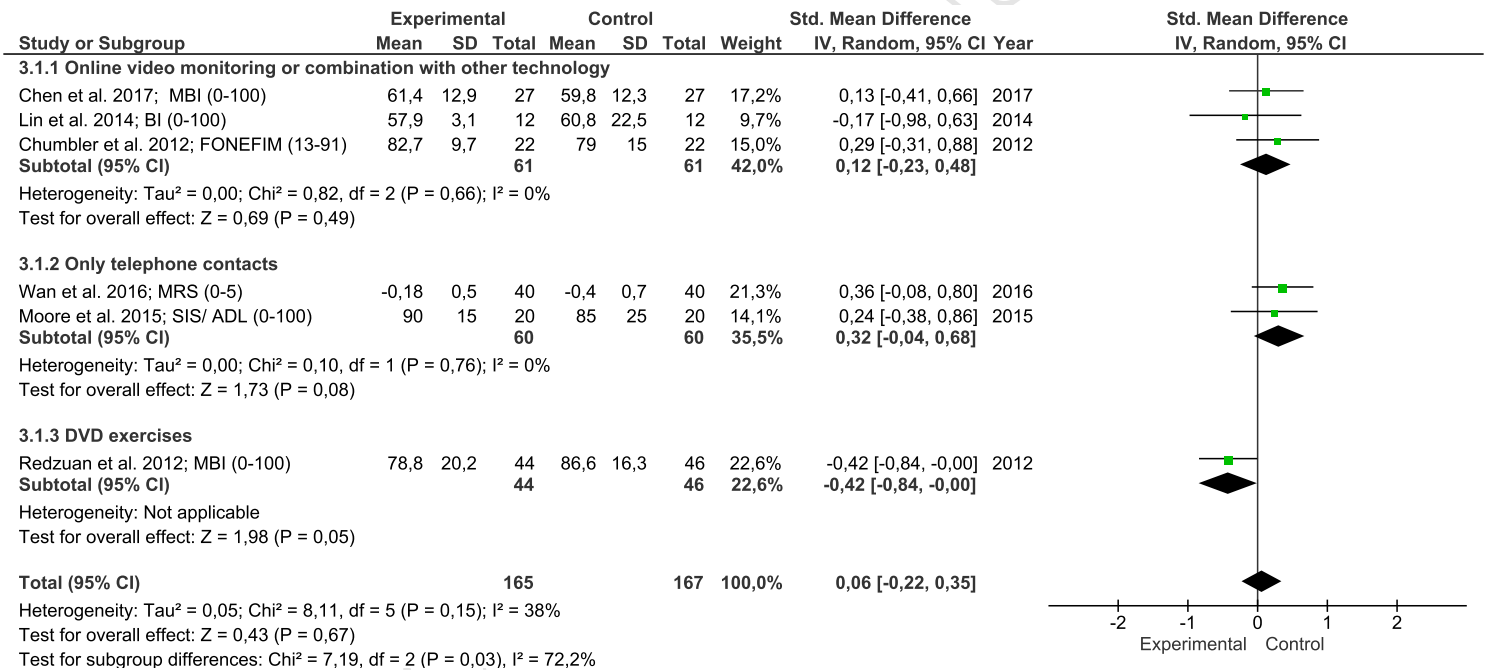
Participation	Quality of the study by Furlan et al. (2015) 8/13 (moderate)	Self-reported questionnaires	Stroke survivors with age between 60 and 69 years	Sample size varied between 19 and 63 participants	-	⊕000	Methodological quality of the studies indicated somewhat risk of bias
Four studies	Treatment allocation procedure reported sufficiently only in two studies	Technology varied from telephone calls (three studies) and website exercises (one study)	Mild to moderate physical impairments without cognitive deficits	Qualitative synthesis indicated no differences			Clinical heterogeneity observed in the use of technology
		Control group consisted of traditional treatments (three studies) and other treatment (one study)					Sample size in total < 400
							Only focusing on elderly persons with stroke with mild impairments without cognitive deficits

GRADE, Grading of Recommendations, Assessment, Development and Evaluation; ADL, Activities of daily living; BI, Barthel Index, FONEFIM, The telephone version of the Functional Independence Measure; MBI, Modified Barthel Index; MRS, Modified Rankin Scale; SIS/ADL, Stroke Impact Scale ADL subscale; ITT, intention-to-treat analysis; N, study sample; SMD, standard mean difference; 95%CI, 95 % Confidence interval; BBS, Berg Balance Scale; MD, mean difference; \*GRADE was considered either high quality (4 plus), we are very confident that the true effect lies close to that of the estimate of the effect; Moderate quality (3 plus), we are moderately confident in the effect estimate: the true effect is likely to be close to the estimate of the effect, but there is a possibility that it is substantially different; Low quality (2 plus), our confidence in the effect estimate is limited: the true effect may be substantially different from the estimate of the effect; Very low

quality (1 plus), we have very little confidence in the effect estimate: the true effect is likely to be substantially different from the estimate of effect.

ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT







## Appendix 1: Examples of the search strategies per database.

Database: Database of the National Library of Medicine (Ovid MEDLINE)

Search Strategy:  
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- 1 exercise therapy/ (33186)
- 2 exercise therapy.tw. (2187)
- 3 Physical Therapy Modalities/ (32745)
- 4 physical therapy.tw. (11686)
- 5 physiotherapy.tw. (12549)
- 6 functional therapy.tw. (321)
- 7 Occupational Therapy/ (12632)
- 8 Neuropsychology/ (2178)
- 9 dietitian.tw. (652)
- 10 dietitian.tw. (2104)
- 11 Dietetics/ (0)
- 12 Occupational Health Services/ (10266)
- 13 multidisciplinary therapy.tw. (319)
- 14 physical activity.tw. (67630)
- 15 Exercise/ (83974)
- 16 Exercise Movement Techniques/ (547)
- 17 Motor Activity/ (91252)
- 18 energy expenditure.tw. (18902)
- 19 "Delivery of Health Care"/ (76316)
- 20 public health service\$.tw. (5709)
- 21 Nursing Diagnosis/ (4193)
- 22 Nursing Informatics/ (1216)
- 23 Community Health Nursing/ (19236)
- 24 Nursing/ (50691)
- 25 Public Health Nursing/ (10062)
- 26 medical treatment\$.tw. (38891)
- 27 Psychiatry/ (38091)
- 28 Rehabilitation/ (17670)
- 29 Health Promotion/ (64237)
- 30 health course?ling.tw. (630)
- 31 directive course?ling.tw. (136)
- 32 coaching.tw. (3157)
- 33 health guidance.tw. (320)
- 34 "Activities of Daily Living"/ (57898)
- 35 adl.tw. (7001)
- 36 participation.tw. (104919)
- 37 cultural activities.tw. (184)
- 38 Leisure Activities/ (7552)
- 39 "Physical Education and Training"/ (13396)
- 40 Primary Prevention/ (16447)
- 41 Secondary Prevention/ (17463)
- 42 Tertiary Prevention/ (123)
- 43 Sports/ (27823)
- 44 active lifestyle.tw. (1036)
- 45 physical lifestyle.tw. (30)
- 46 Physical Fitness/ (25457)

- 47 Health Education/ (57740)  
48 Patient Education as Topic/ (79380)  
49 Behavior Therapy/ (26316)  
50 Cognitive Therapy/ (21041)  
51 1 or 2 or 3 or 4 or 5 or 6 or 7 or 8 or 9 or 10 or 11 or 12 or 13 or 14 or 15 or 16 or 17 or  
18 or 19 or 20 or 21 or 22 or 23 or 24 or 25 or 26 or 27 or 28 or 29 or 30 or 31 or 32 or 33 or  
34 or 35 or 36 or 37 or 38 or 39 or 40 or 41 or 42 or 43 or 44 or 45 or 46 or 47 or 48 or 49 or  
50 (971873)  
52 mobile system\$.tw. (194)  
53 Telemedicine/ (15890)  
54 ehealth.tw. (993)  
55 mobile health.tw. (858)  
56 mhealth.tw. (573)  
57 phealth.tw. (31)  
58 mobile multimedia.tw. (11)  
59 mobile communication\$.tw. (521)  
60 mobile technolog\$.tw. (696)  
61 Cellular Phone/ (6815)  
62 cellular phone\$.tw. (614)  
63 cell phone\$.tw. (1512)  
64 cellular telephone\$.tw. (358)  
65 mobile phone\$.tw. (3942)  
66 mobile telephone\$.tw. (390)  
67 Mobile Health Units/ (3340)  
68 Computers, Handheld/ (2988)  
69 communication technolog\$.tw. (2094)  
70 technology integration.tw. (74)  
71 web based communication\$.tw. (69)  
72 web based organi?ation\$.tw. (0)  
73 virtual communit\$.tw. (193)  
74 e-learning environment\$.tw. (33)  
75 User-Computer Interface/ (33427)  
76 virtual learning environment\$.tw. (149)  
77 acceleromet\$.tw. (8755)  
78 mobile application\$.tw. (465)  
79 web based interacti\$.tw. (158)  
80 (mobile adj3 game\$.tw. (53)  
81 mobile gaming.tw. (6)  
82 pervasive game\$.tw. (0)  
83 Geographic Information Systems/ (6153)  
84 global positioning system\$.tw. (1046)  
85 telerehabilitation.tw. (299)  
86 tele rehabilitation.tw. (48)  
87 "web 2.0 intervention\$".tw. (5)  
88 "web 2.0 application\$".tw. (30)  
89 smart phone\$.tw. (411)  
90 Remote Consultation/ (4478)  
91 sms.tw. (3517)  
92 Text Messaging/ (1499)  
93 text messag\$.tw. (1645)

- 94 digital learning.tw. (35)
- 95 52 or 53 or 54 or 55 or 56 or 57 or 58 or 59 or 60 or 61 or 62 or 63 or 64 or 65 or 66 or 67 or 68 or 69 or 70 or 71 or 72 or 73 or 74 or 75 or 76 or 77 or 78 or 79 or 80 or 81 or 82 or 83 or 84 or 85 or 86 or 87 or 88 or 89 or 90 or 91 or 92 or 93 or 94 (86832)
- 96 Randomized Controlled Trials as Topic/ (111565)
- 97 Randomized Controlled Trial/ (456758)
- 98 Random Allocation/ (91691)
- 99 Double-Blind Method/ (145855)
- 100 Single-Blind Method/ (24143)
- 101 Clinical Trial/ (518217)
- 102 clinical trial, phase i.pt. (18539)
- 103 clinical trial, phase ii.pt. (29766)
- 104 clinical trial, phase iii.pt. (13493)
- 105 clinical trial, phase iv.pt. (1438)
- 106 controlled clinical trial.pt. (93340)
- 107 randomized controlled trial.pt. (456758)
- 108 multicenter study.pt. (223183)
- 109 clinical trial.pt. (518217)
- 110 exp Clinical Trials as Topic/ (309655)
- 111 96 or 97 or 98 or 99 or 100 or 101 or 102 or 103 or 104 or 105 or 106 or 107 or 108 or 109 or 110 (1213187)
- 112 (clinical adj trial\$.tw. (254191)
- 113 ((signl\$ or doubl\$ or treb\$ or tripl\$) adj (blind\$3 or mask\$3)).tw. (130636)
- 114 Placebos/ (34752)
- 115 placebo\$.tw. (176629)
- 116 randomly allocated.tw. (19700)
- 117 (allocated adj2 random\$.tw. (22444)
- 118 112 or 113 or 114 or 115 or 116 or 117 (470963)
- 119 111 or 118 (1362773)
- 120 case report.tw. (213814)
- 121 letter/ (924107)
- 122 Historical Article/ (344334)
- 123 120 or 121 or 122 (1468852)
- 124 119 not 123 (1330227)
- 125 51 and 95 and 124 (3317)
- 126 intervention\$.tw,kf. (648169)
- 127 stroke.mp. or Stroke/ (207599)
- 128 cardiovascular disease.mp. or Cardiovascular Diseases/ (174150)
- 129 hemiplegia.mp. or Hemiplegia/ (13843)
- 130 brain ischemia\$.mp. or Brain Ischemia/ (44914)
- 131 cerebrovascular accident\$.mp. (5584)
- 132 brain infarction/ (3863)
- 133 cerebrovascular disease.mp. or Cerebrovascular Disorders/ (53477)
- 134 127 or 128 or 129 or 130 or 131 or 132 or 133 (435463)
- 135 125 and 126 and 134 (186)
- 136 limit 135 to (yr="2000 -Current" and (english or finnish or german or swedish)) (186)
- 137 limit 136 to ("young adult (19 to 24 years)" or "adult (19 to 44 years)" or "young adult and adult (19-24 and 19-44)" or "middle age (45 to 64 years)" or "middle aged (45 plus years)" or "all aged (65 and over)" or "aged (80 and over)") (135)

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Database: Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials (CCRCT)

Search Strategy:

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("Exercise therapy" OR "physical therapy modalities" OR "physical therapy" OR "functional therapy" OR "occupational therapy" OR neuropsychology OR dietician OR dietitian OR dietetics OR "occupational health services" OR "multidisciplinary therapy" OR "physical activity" OR exercise OR "exercise movement therapy" OR "motor activity" OR "energy expenditure" OR "delivery of health care" OR "public health service\$" OR "nursing diagnosis" OR "nursing informatics" OR "community health nursing" OR nursing OR "public health nursing" OR "medical treatment\$" OR psychiatry OR rehabilitation OR "health promotion" OR "health course?ling" OR "directive course?ling" OR coaching OR "health guidance" OR "activities of daily living" OR adl OR participation OR "cultural activities" OR "leisure activities" OR "physical education and training" OR "primary prevention" OR "secondary prevention" OR "tertiary prevention" OR sports OR "active lifestyle" OR "physical lifestyle" OR "physical fitness" OR "health education" OR "patient education" OR "behavior therapy" OR "cognitive therapy") AND ("mobile system\$" OR telemedicine OR ehealth OR "mobile health" OR mhealth OR phealth OR "mobile multimedia" OR "mobile communication\$" OR "mobile technolog\$" OR "cellular phone\$" OR "cell phone\$" OR "cellular telephone\$" OR "mobile phone\$" OR "mobile telephone\$" OR "mobile health units" OR computer\$ OR handheld OR "communication technolog\$" OR "technology integration" OR "web\$based communication\$" OR "web\$based organi?ation\$" OR "virtual communit\$" OR "e\$learning environment\$" OR "user\$computer interface" OR "virtual learning environment\$" OR acceleromet\$ OR "mobile app\$" OR "web\$based interacti\$" OR mobile OR "mobile gaming" OR "pervasive game\$" OR "geographic infromation systems" OR "global positioning system\$" OR telerehabilitation OR "tele rehabilitation" OR "web 2.0 intervention\$" OR "web 2.0 application\$" OR "smart phone\$" OR "remote consultation" OR sms OR "text messaging" OR "text messag\$" OR "digital learning") AND ("randomised controlled trials" OR "randomized controlled trial" OR "random allocation" OR "double-blind method" OR "single-blind method" OR "clinical trial" OR "controlled clinical trial" OR "multicenter study" OR "clinical trial") AND ("stroke" OR hemiplegia OR "cardiovascular disease" OR "cardiovascular accident" OR hemiparesis OR "brain ischemia" OR "brain infarction")

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Database: Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL)

Search Strategy:

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S125

S120 AND S121

Limiters - Published Date: 20000101-20171231

Narrow by SubjectAge: - all adult

Narrow by Language: - English or Finnish or German or Swedish

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (108) View Details Edit

S124

S120 AND S121

Limiters - Published Date: 20000101-20171231

Narrow by Language: - english

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (184) View Details Edit

S123

S120 AND S121

Limiters - Published Date: 20000101-20171231

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (186) View Details Edit

S122

S120 AND S121

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (191) View Details Edit

S121

AB stroke OR AB cerebrovascular accident OR AB cerebrovascular disease OR AB hemiplegia OR AB hemiparesis OR AB brain infarction OR AB brain ischemia

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (36,165) View Details Edit

S120

S107 AND S119

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (3,631) View Details Edit

S119

S108 AND S117 AND S118

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (10,569) View Details Edit

S118

S96 OR S97 OR S99 OR S100 OR S101 OR S102 OR S103 OR S104 OR S105 OR S106

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (870,719) View Details Edit

S117

S49 OR S50 OR S51 OR S52 OR S53 OR S54 OR S55 OR S56 OR S57 OR S58 OR S59 OR S60 OR S61 OR S62 OR S63 OR S64 OR S65 OR S66 OR S67 OR S68 OR S69 OR S70 OR S71 OR S72 OR S73 OR S74 OR S75 OR S76 OR S77 OR S78 OR S79 OR S80 OR S81 OR S82 OR S83 OR S84 OR S85 OR S86 OR S87 OR S88 OR S89 OR S90 OR S91 OR S92 OR S93 OR S94 OR S95 OR S110 OR S111 OR S112 OR S113 OR S114 OR S115 OR S116

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (113,822) View Details Edit

S116

AB tele\* OR telephone

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (30,469) View Details Edit

S115

AB technology

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (30,493) View Details Edit

S114

AB smartphone

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (373) View Details Edit

S113

AB internet

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (9,038) View Details Edit

S112

AB pedometer

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (641) View Details Edit

S111

AB game\* OR AB gaming

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (4,061) View Details Edit

S110

AB web\*

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (16,678) View Details Edit

S109

AB mobile OR AB mobile phone OR AB mobile devices OR AB mobile apps OR AB mobile technology  
OR AB mobile applications

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (3,573) View Details Edit

S108

S1 OR S2 OR S3 OR S4 OR S5 OR S6 OR S7 OR S8 OR S9 OR S10 OR S11 OR S12 OR S13 OR S14 OR S15  
OR S16 OR S17 OR S18 OR S19 OR S20 OR S21 OR S22 OR S23 OR S24 OR S25 OR S26 OR S27 OR S28  
OR S29 OR S30 OR S31 OR S32 OR S33 OR S34 OR S35 OR S36 OR S37 OR S38 OR S39 OR S40 OR S41  
OR S42 OR S43 OR S44 OR S45 OR S46 OR S47 OR S48

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (512,620) View Details Edit

S107

"intervention"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (196,330) View Details Edit

S106

TX allocat\* random\*

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (4,258) View Details Edit

S105

(MH "Quantitative Studies")

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (12,350) View Details Edit

S104

(MH "Placebos")

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (7,840) View Details Edit

S103

TX placebo\*

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (31,751) View Details Edit

S102

TX random\* allocat\*

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (4,258) View Details Edit

S101

(MH "Random Assignment")

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (34,534) View Details Edit

S100

TX randomi\* control\* trial\*

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (74,353) View Details Edit

S99

TX ( (singl\* n1 blind\*) or (singl\* n1 mask\*) ) OR TX ( (doubl\* n1 blind\*) or (doubl\* n1 mask') ) OR TX ( (tripl\* n1 blind\*) or (tripl\* n1 mask\*) ) OR TX ( (trebl\* n1 blind\*) or (trebl\* n1 mask\*) )

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (723,268) View Details Edit

S98

TX clinic\* n1 trial\*

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (134,892) View Details Edit

S97

"clinical trial"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (16,844) View Details Edit

S96

"Clinical Trials"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase



View Results (103,451) View Details Edit

S95

"digital learning"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (25) View Details Edit

S94

"text messag\*"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (1,023) View Details Edit

S93

"Text Messaging"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (849) View Details Edit

S92

"sms"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (343) View Details Edit

S91

"Remote Consultation"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (735) View Details Edit

S90

"smart phone\*"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (111) View Details Edit

S89

""web 2.0 application\*""

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (40) View Details Edit

S88

""web 2.0 intervention\*""

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (5) View Details Edit

S87

"tele rehabilitation"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (16) View Details Edit

S86

"telerehabilitation"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (165) View Details Edit

S85

"global positioning system\*"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (215) View Details Edit

S84

"Geographic Information Systems"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (1,623) View Details Edit

S83

"pervasive game\*"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (6) View Details Edit

S82

"mobile gaming"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (1) View Details Edit

S81

"mobile w3 game\*"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (27) View Details Edit

S80

"web based interacti\*"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (42) View Details Edit

S79

"mobile application\*"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (1,266) View Details Edit

S78

"acceleromet\*"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (3,792) View Details Edit

S77

"Accelerometers"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (1,418) View Details Edit

S76

"Accelerometry"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (2,342) View Details Edit

S75

"virtual learning environment\*"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (97) View Details Edit

S74

"e-learning environment\*"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (23) View Details Edit

S73

"virtual communit\*"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (143) View Details Edit

S72

"web based organi?ation\*"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (1) View Details Edit

S71

"web based communication\*"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (37) View Details Edit

S70

"technology integration"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (40) View Details Edit

S69

"communication technolog\*"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (756) View Details Edit

S68

"Computers" OR "Hand-Held"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (14,006) View Details Edit

S67

"Mobile Health Units"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (1,228) View Details Edit

S66

"mobile telephone\*"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (77) View Details Edit

S65

"mobile phone\*"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (834) View Details Edit

S64

"cellular telephone\*"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (96) View Details Edit

S63

"cell phone\*"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (600) View Details Edit

S62

"cellular phone\*"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (469) View Details Edit

S61

"Wireless Communications"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (6,822) View Details Edit

S60

"mobile technolog\*"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (295) View Details Edit

S59

"mobile communication\*"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (73) View Details Edit

S58

""mobile multimedia""

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (12) View Details Edit

S57

"phealth"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (1) View Details Edit

S56

"mhealth"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (201) View Details Edit

S55

"mobile health"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (1,451) View Details Edit

S54

"Mobile Health Units"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (1,228) View Details Edit

S53

"ehealth"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (245) View Details Edit

S52

"Telehealth"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (3,986) View Details Edit

S51

"Telemedicine"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (4,334) View Details Edit

S50

"mobile system\*"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (22) View Details Edit

S49

"Telecommunications"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (1,702) View Details Edit

S48

"Cognitive Therapy"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (9,050) View Details Edit

S47

"Behavior Therapy"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (5,838) View Details Edit

S46

"Patient Education"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (45,516) View Details Edit

S45

"Health Education"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (26,679) View Details Edit

S44

"Physical Fitness"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (9,771) View Details Edit

S43

"physical lifestyle"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (13) View Details Edit

S42

"active lifestyle"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (396) View Details Edit

S41

"Sports"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (25,459) View Details Edit

S40

"tertiary prevention"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (219) View Details Edit

S39

"secondary prevention"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (2,978) View Details Edit

S38

"primary prevention"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (3,217) View Details Edit

S37

("Leisure Activities") OR ("Physical Education and Training")

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (6,064) View Details Edit

S36

"cultural activities"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (67) View Details Edit

S35

"Social Participation"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (1,980) View Details Edit

S34

"Sports Participation"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase



View Results (853) View Details Edit

S33

participation

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (49,539) View Details Edit

S32

adl

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (2,949) View Details Edit

S31

"Activities of Daily Living"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (22,176) View Details Edit

S30

"health guidance"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (105) View Details Edit

S29

coaching

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (2,066) View Details Edit

S28

"directive counsel#ing"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (53) View Details Edit

S27

"health counsel#ing"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (266) View Details Edit

S26

"Health Promotion"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (40,003) View Details Edit

S25

"Rehabilitation"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (109,567) View Details Edit

S24

"Psychiatry"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (13,077) View Details Edit

S23

""medical treatment\*""

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (9,430) View Details Edit

S22

"Community Health Nursing"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (21,877) View Details Edit

S21

"Nursing Informatics"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (2,570) View Details Edit

S20

"Nursing Diagnosis"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (3,767) View Details Edit

S19

"public health services"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (483) View Details Edit

S18

"Health Care Delivery"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (33,895) View Details Edit

S17

"energy expenditure"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (3,224) View Details Edit

S16

"Energy Metabolism"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (7,926) View Details Edit

S15

"Therapeutic Exercise"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (13,392) View Details Edit

S14

"Exercise"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (90,277) View Details Edit

S13

"physical activity"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (34,167) View Details Edit

S12

"Physical Activity"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (34,167) View Details Edit

S11

""multidisciplinary therapy""

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (273) View Details Edit

S10

"Occupational Health Services"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (4,478) View Details Edit

S9

dietician\*

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (325) View Details Edit

S8

"Dietitians"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (4,562) View Details Edit

S7

"Neuropsychology"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (1,192) View Details Edit

S6

"Occupational Therapy"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (24,877) View Details Edit

S5

"functional therapy"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (61) View Details Edit

S4

"physiotherapy"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (9,720) View Details Edit

S3

"physical therapy"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (36,184) View Details Edit

S2

"exercise therapy"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (716) View Details Edit

S1

"Therapeutic Exercise"

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

View Results (13,392) View Details Edit

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Database: Excerpta Medica Database (EMBASE)

Search Strategy:

No.	Query	Results
#156	#147 AND #154 AND ([english]/lim OR [finnish]/lim OR [german]/lim OR [swedish]/lim) AND [adult]/lim AND [medline]/lim	25
#155	#147 AND #15445	
#154	#148 OR #149 OR #150 OR #151 OR #152 OR #153	307732
#153	'brain infarction':ab,ti	2678
#152	'cerebrovascular accident':ab,ti	5477
#151	'brain ischemia':ab,ti	5641
#150	'cerebrovascular disease':ab,ti	18618
#149	'hemiplegia':ab,ti	9229
#148	'stroke':ab,ti	278618
#147	#143 AND #146	1105
#146	#144 OR #145	974320
#145	intervention*:ab,ti	969165
#144	'intervention study'/exp	31062
#143	#56 AND #114 AND #141 AND [article]/lim AND ([english]/lim OR [finnish]/lim OR [german]/lim OR [swedish]/lim) AND [adult]/lim AND [humans]/lim AND [1-1-2000]/sd	1815
#142	#56 AND #114 AND #141	4663
#141	#136 NOT #140	1737846
#140	#137 OR #138 OR #139	1380689

- #139 'abstract report'/exp OR 'letter'/exp 1007638
- #138 'case report':ab,ti 335718
- #137 'case study'/exp 44931
- #136 #115 OR #116 OR #117 OR #118 OR #119 OR #120 OR #121 OR #122 OR #123 OR #124 OR #125 OR #126 OR #127 OR #128 OR #129 OR #130 OR #131 OR #132 OR #133 OR #134 OR #135  
1783143
- #135 'prospective study'/exp 360900
- #134 placebo\*:ab,ti 249641
- #133 ((treble OR triple) NEAR/1 blind\*):ab,ti 741
- #132 (double NEXT/1 blind\*):ab,ti 175548
- #131 (single NEXT/1 blind\*):ab,ti 18898
- #130 (allocated NEAR/2 random):ab,ti 853
- #129 'allocated randomly':ab,ti 2203
- #128 'randomly allocated':ab,ti 26662
- #127 'random allocation':ab,ti 1633
- #126 'rct':ab,ti 23240
- #125 'randomized controlled trials':ab,ti 51485
- #124 'randomized controlled trial':ab,ti 63305
- #123 'randomised controlled trials':ab,ti 19476
- #122 'randomised controlled trial':ab,ti 20352
- #121 'placebo'/exp 302266
- #120 'crossover procedure'/exp 49994
- #119 'double blind procedure'/exp 136014
- #118 'single blind procedure'/exp 25893
- #117 'randomization'/exp 72481
- #116 'randomized controlled trial'/exp 436336
- #115 'clinical trial'/exp 1174273
- #114 #57 OR #58 OR #59 OR #60 OR #61 OR #62 OR #63 OR #64 OR #65 OR #66 OR #67 OR #68 OR #69 OR #70 OR #71 OR #72 OR #73 OR #74 OR #75 OR #76 OR #77 OR #78 OR #79 OR #80 OR #81 OR #82 OR #83 OR #84 OR #85 OR #86 OR #87 OR #88 OR #89 OR #90 OR #91 OR #92 OR #93 OR #94 OR #95 OR #96 OR #97 OR #98 OR #99 OR #100 OR #101 OR #102 OR #103 OR #104 OR #105 OR #106 OR #107 OR #108 OR #109 OR #110 OR #111 OR #112 OR #113 139190
- #113 'digital learning':ab,ti 63

#112	(text NEXT/1 messag*):ab,ti	2682
#111	'text messaging'/exp	2423
#110	'sms':ab,ti	5287
#109	'teleconsultation'/exp	7476
#108	(smart NEXT/1 phone*):ab,ti	1171
#107	'web 2.0 applications':ab,ti	35
#106	'web 2.0 application':ab,ti	7
#105	'web 2.0 interventions':ab,ti	4
#104	'web 2.0 intervention':ab,ti	1
#103	'tele rehabilitation':ab,ti	92
#102	'telerehabilitation':ab,ti	450
#101	'global positioning systems':ab,ti	210
#100	'global positioning system':ab,ti	1158
#99	'global positioning system':de	1636
#98	'geographic information system'/exp	7764
#97	(pervasive NEXT/1 game*):ab,ti	0
#96	'mobile gaming':ab,ti	11
#95	(mobile NEXT/3 game*):ab,ti	49
#94	'web based interactively':ab,ti	0
#93	'web based interactive':ab,ti	235
#92	'web based interaction':ab,ti	10
#91	(mobile NEXT/1 application*):ab,ti	1005
#90	'mobile application':de	3298
#89	acceleromet*:ab,ti	12686
#88	'accelerometer':de	7139
#87	'virtual learning environments':ab,ti	62
#86	'virtual learning environment':ab,ti	177
#85	'computer interface'/exp	25436
#84	(e+learning NEXT/1 environment*):ab,ti	62
#83	(virtual NEXT/1 communit*):ab,ti	274
#82	'web based organizations':ab,ti	0

#81 'web based organisations':ab,ti 0

#80 'web based organization':ab,ti 1

#79 'web based organisation':ab,ti 1

#78 'web based communications':ab,ti 9

#77 'web based communication':ab,ti 100

#76 'technology integration':ab,ti 106

#75 (communication NEXT/1 technolog\*):ab,ti 2963

#74 'microcomputer'/exp 14457

#73 'preventive health service'/exp 24222

#72 (mobile NEXT/1 telephone\*):ab,ti 544

#71 (mobile NEXT/1 phone\*):ab,ti 6101

#70 (cellular NEXT/1 telephone\*):ab,ti 450

#69 (cell NEXT/1 phone\*):ab,ti 2392

#68 (cellular NEXT/1 phone\*):ab,ti 862

#67 'mobile phone'/exp 14027

#66 (mobile NEXT/1 technolog\*):ab,ti 1182

#65 (mobile NEXT/1 communication\*):ab,ti 656

#64 'mobile multimedia':ab,ti 13

#63 'phealth':ab,ti 36

#62 'mhealth':ab,ti 922

#61 'mobile health':ab,ti 1295

#60 'ehealth':ab,ti 1331

#59 'telehealth':de 2882

#58 'telemedicine'/exp 26147

#57 (mobile NEXT/1 system\*):ab,ti 290

#56 #1 OR #2 OR #3 OR #4 OR #5 OR #6 OR #7 OR #8 OR #9 OR #10 OR #11 OR #12 OR #13 OR  
 #14 OR #15 OR #16 OR #17 OR #18 OR #19 OR #20 OR #21 OR #22 OR #23 OR #24 OR #25 OR #26 OR  
 #27 OR #28 OR #29 OR #30 OR #31 OR #32 OR #33 OR #34 OR #35 OR #36 OR #37 OR #38 OR #39 OR  
 #40 OR #41 OR #42 OR #43 OR #44 OR #45 OR #46 OR #47 OR #48 OR #49 OR #50 OR #51 OR #52 OR  
 #53 OR #54 OR #55 2024827

#55 'cognitive therapy':de 41157

#54 'behavior therapy':de 40321



#53 'patient education':de 97125  
#52 'health education':de 94979  
#51 'fitness':de 38063  
#50 'physical lifestyle':ab,ti 39  
#49 'active lifestyle':ab,ti 1662  
#48 'sport':de 71185  
#47 'secondary prevention':de 21912  
#46 'primary prevention':de33232  
#45 'physical education':de 11678  
#44 'leisure':de 25659  
#43 'cultural activities':ab,ti 257  
#42 'participation':ab,ti 143911  
#41 'adl':ab,ti 12041  
#40 'daily life activity':de 68493  
#39 'health guidance':ab,ti 432  
#38 'coaching':ab,ti 4997  
#37 'directive counseling' 758  
#36 'directive counselling' 103  
#35 'directive counseling':de 674  
#34 'health counseling' 723  
#33 'health counselling' 236  
#32 'health promotion':de 80675  
#31 'rehabilitation':de 130139  
#30 'psychiatry':de 103472  
#29 '(medical NEXT/1 treatment\*):ab,ti 60091  
#28 'nursing':de 501347  
#27 'community health nursing':de 26490  
#26 'nursing informatics':de 1146  
#25 'nursing diagnosis':de 3948  
#24 'public health services':ab,ti 2425  
#23 'public health service':ab,ti 4327

#22	'health care delivery':de	146593
#21	'energy expenditure':ab,ti	25354
#20	'energy expenditure':de	26819
#19	'motor activity':de	43681
#18	'exercise':de	318428
#17	'physical activity':ab,ti	100742
#16	'physical activity':de	112370
#15	'multidisciplinary therapy':ab,ti	472
#14	'occupational health service':de	9792
#13	'dietetics':de	6900
#12	'dietitian':ab,ti	3898
#11	'dietician':ab,ti	1939
#10	'dietitian':de	7588
#9	'neuropsychology':de	16937
#8	'occupational therapy':de	20540
#7	'functional therapy':ab,ti	418
#6	'physiotherapy':ab,ti	24857
#5	'physical therapy':ab,ti	20263
#4	'physiotherapy':de	72608
#3	'exercise therapy':ab,ti	3407
#2	'kinesiotherapy':ab,ti	323
#1	'kinesiotherapy':de	27754

\*\*\*\*\*

Database: Physiotherapy Evidence Database (PEDro)  
Search Strategy:

-----  
V.2000->, CLINICAL TRIALS

Combined results from the following searches:

Stroke AND technology = 21 studies

Stroke AND accelerometer = 5 studies

Stroke AND pedometer = 4 studies

Stroke AND tele = 3 studies

Stroke AND phone = 5 studies

Stroke AND telephone = 22 studies

Stroke AND web = 5 studies

Stroke AND mobile = 10 studies

Stroke AND telerehabilitation = 12 studies

Stroke AND smartphone = 3 studies

Stroke AND remote = 9 studies

Stroke AND game = 22 studies

Stroke AND gaming = 12 studies

\*\*\*\*\*

Database: Web of Science (WOS)

Search Strategy:

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Set

Web of Science Core Collection

Search History - " Stroke and Techno"

#10 #9 AND #8

DocType=All document types; Language=All languages;

#9 TOPIC: (stroke) OR TOPIC: (brain ischemia) OR TOPIC: (hemiplegia) OR TOPIC: (cerebrovascular accident) OR TOPIC: (cerebrovascular disease) OR TOPIC: (hemiparesis) OR TOPIC: (brain infarction)

DocType=All document types; Language=All languages;

#8 #6 AND #4 NOT PMID=(1\* OR 2\* OR 3\* OR 4\* OR 5\* OR 6\* OR 7\* OR 8\* OR 9\*)

DocType=All document types; Language=All languages;

#7 #6 AND #4

DocType=All document types; Language=All languages;

#6 #3 AND #2 AND #1

DocType=All document types; Language=All languages;

#5 TOPIC: ((randomised controlled trials OR randomized controlled trial OR random allocation OR double-blind method OR single-blind method OR clinical trial OR controlled clinical trial OR multicenter study OR clinical trial OR randomly allocated)) NOT TOPIC: ("case report" OR "case study" OR letter OR "historical article")

DocType=All document types; Language=All languages;

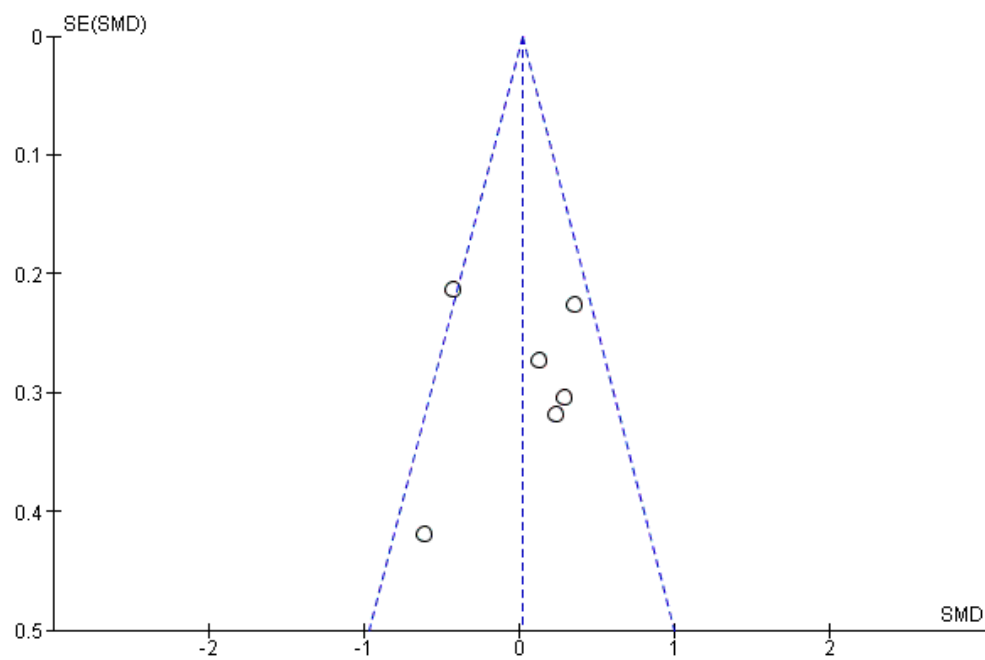


Appendix 2. Summary of included RCT studies on the used technologies and its communicative interactions thereof in the distance physical rehabilitation interventions.

Study	Technology					Interaction*					Comparison		Outcomes							
	Telephone	Online video	Messaging/SMS	Video	Virtual reality or training	Website	Activity monitor	2-way interaction	1-way interaction	Self-monitoring	Other treatment	Usual care	Similar treatment without the use of technology	ADL	Balance	Upper extremity	Lower extremity	Walking	Physical activity	Participation
Ada et al. 2003	X							X			X									X
Ballester et al. 2017					X					X		X		X		X				
Chen et al. 2017		X						X				X		X	X					
Chumbler et al. 2012	X	X	X					X				X		X		X	X			X
Emmerson et al. 2016				X					X			X				X				
Lin et al. 2014		X						X				X		X	X					
Moore et al. 2015	X							X			X			X	X			X	X	X
Nijenhuis et al. 2017						X			X			X				X				X
Piron et al. 2009		X			X			X				X				X				
Redzuan et al. 2012				X								X		X						
Standen et al. 2017					X					X		X		X		X				
Van den Berg et al. 2016		X					X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Wan et al. 2016	X							X				X		X						X

SMS = Short Message Service; ADL = Activities of Daily Living, \* = Interaction of communication enabled through the used technologies between participant and the health care professional

## Appendix 3. Funnel plot of activities of daily living.



SE, Standard Error; SMD, Standard Mean Difference; MD, Mean Difference