

BALNEOLOGY FOR HEALTHY AGING

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Background

- People in the world are living longer, and the number of older adults in the population is growing. 10% of the total population in the world are aged 65 or over, and this figure is expected to be over 16% in 2050. Balneological treatments have been used widely in many countries for treating certain pathologies mostly the rheumatic diseases and could be a tool for healthy aging.

Material & Methods

- We searched database PubMed and Scopus with keywords balneology and ageing. The search was limited to last 10 years. Nine studies that use balneotherapy (thermal water, mud), hydrotherapy and physical therapy for treatment of elderly people with some chronic diseases were included.

Results

- Studies monitored effects of balneotherapy on knee osteoarthritis, low back pain, musculoskeletal diseases, fibromyalgia and osteoarthritis. In most of the studies balneotherapy was combined with physical activity. Mud therapy was effective for osteoarthritis and fibromyalgia.
- All studies showed improvement of patients, reducing pain, positively contributes to functionality and quality of life. Some spa centres in Europe combine balneotherapy and health promotion to promote active and healthy ageing.



Picture 1. Mud-bathing



Picture 2. Bathing in thermal water

Conclusion

Balneotherapy is an effective treatment modality in elderly patients with osteoarthritis of the knee, osteoarthritis, fibromyalgia and low back pain, and its benefits last for at least 3 months after treatment in some patients.

The evidence on the positive effects of balneological factors and interventions on the elderly people indicates that balneology and spa tradition could be a tool for healthy ageing. Additional high-quality controlled trials need to be conducted to confirm this conclusion.