

Role of Physiotherapy in Diastasis Recti: A Systematic Review

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Diastasis Recti Abdominis is characterized by separation of the rectus abdominal muscle along the linea alba during pregnancy or postpartum period, impacting quality of life well beyond childbirth. This review emphasizes tailored management programs and encourages data driven decision making in physiotherapy practice to improve quality of life. This review was prompted by a lack of standardized assessment and training protocols, and hence aims to identify effective management strategies, and address gaps and limitations in the existing literature.

Objective: Objective of the study is to consolidate existing evidence and explore potential areas for future research.

Inclusion Criteria: Selection criteria included randomized controlled studies and experimental studies investigating exercise therapy interventions both with and without adjunct modalities for Diastasis Recti Abdominis.

Methods: Search strategy: electronic search conducted on databases such as Google scholar, pubmed, Scopus, sciencedirect. Keywords included "diastasis recti abdominis", "postpartum", "core rehabilitation", "abdominal strengthening".

Data extraction: experimental studies or observational studies published in English were selected. Characteristics of the study

(sample, diagnostic criteria, program design and outcome measures) were recorded from the articles fulfilling eligibility.

Data analysis: Guided by the standards of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) Statement. Studies had varying sample sizes, different cut-off points for Diastasis Recti diagnosis and varying program duration.

Results: Exercises like abdominal and pelvic floor muscle training, functional exercises and adjuncts showed significant reduction in inter- rectus distance and dysfunction, with transverse abdominis training as a key component of most protocols. Apart from exercises, other interventions like abdominal binding, yoga etc have also contributed to the favourable results.

Conclusion: Reviewed studies provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of rehabilitation in correction of Diastasis Recti. It is evidently highlighted that a focused exercise program might be a potent approach for treating Diastasis Recti.

Implications: Diastasis Recti Abdominis being often under-diagnosed and considered a mere cosmetic problem underestimates its functional impact. This study aims to improve awareness and encourage use of evidence- based rehabilitation by therapists.

Keywords: Diastasis recti, Pelvic floor muscle training, Inter-rectus distance

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