

## Eligibility criteria

<b>Inclusion criteria</b>	
MS type	Primary and Secondary Progressive MS (confirmed by attending neurologist)
Age	25-65 years
Cognition	Failure on the SDMT defined by a performance of at least 1.282 SD below published normative data (10 <sup>th</sup> percentile) specific for each center taking part <sup>1,2,3,4,5,6</sup>
Visual acuity	Corrected near vision of at least 20/70 and absence of severe nystagmus.
Disease activity	Exacerbation free for three months.
Language comprehension	To ensure that participants could understand the test instructions, they had to demonstrate at least a low average performance on the Token Test.
<b>Exclusion criteria</b>	
Ambulation	EDSS $\geq$ 7.0
Neurological History	A history of central nervous system disease other than PMS. Disease exacerbations in the past three months.
Medications	Steroids use within the past three months
Current exercise activity	Regular aerobic training at an estimated intensity of >60% of the maximal Heart Rate reserve, for more than one day per week lasting more than 30min per session for the past 3 months. Assessment of exercise habits based on the Godin Leisure-Time Exercise Questionnaire score > 23.
Medical contraindications	Failure on 2 or more statements on the American College of Sports Medicine and American Heart Association (AHA/ACSM) Health/Fitness Facility pre-participation screening questionnaire, required physician approval
Psychiatric contraindications	History of substance abuse and severe (psychotic) mental illness, including severe depression ( $\geq$ 29 on the Beck Depression Inventory).
MRI	Claustrophobia, metal implants, pacemakers.

### Cognitive Rehabilitation (CR) protocol:

CR was provided by the computerized RehaCom program. RehaCom is available in over 20 languages including all the languages needed for our trial. The language selection is built into the computer program and accessed via a simple drop down menu. This is a major asset of the RehaCom software as few cognitive rehabilitation programs are available in multiple languages. To address processing speed (PS), the single most common cognitive deficits observed in persons with MS<sup>7</sup> we administered the RehaCom module shown to be effective in targeting this aspect of cognition.<sup>8</sup> In particular, there are five RehaCom training modules, “divided attention 1,” “divided attention 2” “attention and concentration,” “vigilance 2” and “sustained attention” that are integral to processing speed. For example, in the divided attention 1 module, the person is required to simulate a train conductor, carefully observing the control panel of the train and the countryside. Several distractions, such as animals, railway signals and train speed must be taken into account, with increasing levels of difficulty. In the divided attention 2 module, the person is required to simulate driving a car, carefully observing the control panels and the road. Several distractors, such as billboard signs, speed limit signs, radio noise, and remembering to signal right or left turns must be taken into account, with increasing levels of difficulties. In the attention and concentration module, an individual picture (target) is presented and then compared with a matrix of pictures. The person has to recognize the target picture (coded as symbols, items, animals, or abstract figures) and select it from the matrix. The abilities to differentiate and to concentrate are trained simultaneously. The level of difficulty rises as the number and complexity of pictures to recognize increases. During the vigilance 2 task, the person is trained to sustain his or her attention for a prolonged period by providing response times limited to the various items. The task is to control a conveyor belt and to select the objects that differ from a target sample in one or more details. Finally, in the sustained attention module, is similar to the vigilance task, except the speed of the conveyor belt has increased. Participants began at level 1 on each RehaCom module and advanced through the program as dictated by their performance, under the guidance of the RA. Progression was thus individualized, based on the success on each task. Each session comprised of two out of the five modules randomized each session, each module programmed to last 20 minutes, making the duration of each cognitive session 40 minutes, as has been accomplished successfully in previous RehaCom research in persons with MS.<sup>9,10</sup>

Sham Cognitive Rehabilitation (CR-S) protocol: The CR-S condition consisted of internet training, based closely on the internet control group utilized in previous computer-mediated cognitive rehabilitation studies in the literature.<sup>11</sup> The control condition began with more basic tasks such as learning to use a computer and the internet to search for information, including locating information regarding medications, gardening, getting directions, etc. Participants began at the most appropriate level, completing the 24 sessions that followed to match the frequency of the CR treatment group interventions. The control sessions were designed to equate the two CR groups (active and sham) on social and computer contact. This approach has been demonstrated to be effective in controlling for these factors in previous research.<sup>11</sup>

Exercise protocol: In accordance with the MS literature, the exercise intervention of choice was aerobic and performed by recumbent stepper.<sup>12,13</sup> It consisted of one weekly session of continuous exercise alternating with one weekly session of interval training. This ensured variation as well as a greater volume of high intensity exercise during the interval training, thus allowing more exercise time at intensities approaching the  $VO_{2peak}$ . The exercise intervention complied with the basic principle of progressive overload. This meant that there was an inherent progression built into the program involving changes in both exercise time (volume) and intensity.

Type: Aerobic training was performed on an arm-leg recumbent stepper with all centres using the same equipment (NuStep T5XR, <https://www.nustep.com/international/products/t5xr/>) that allowed individual adjustment of stepper settings as well as providing a valid measure of the applied resistance expressed as wattage or kp.

Frequency: Twice weekly with each session separated by one day of rest.

Supervision: Full supervision of all exercise sessions by the trained RA to match that provided during the cognitive rehabilitation sessions.

Format/duration: (Tables A and B)

One session involved continuous exercise initially commencing at 10 minutes and progressing towards 30min/session, with 5 minutes of warm up and 5 minutes of cool down.

**Table A: Continuous exercise schedule**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Target intensity zone (% of HR-reserve*)</b>
1	10 minutes	50-60% of HR-reserve
2	15 minutes	50-60% of HR-reserve
3	20 minutes	50-60% of HR-reserve
4	25 minutes	50-60% of HR-reserve
5	30 minutes	50-60% of HR-reserve
6	30 minutes	50-60% of HR-reserve
7	30 minutes	60-70% of HR-reserve
8	30 minutes	60-70% of HR-reserve
9	30 minutes	65-75% of HR-reserve
10	30 minutes	65-75% of HR-reserve
11	30 minutes	70-80% of HR-reserve
12	30 minutes	70-80% of HR-reserve

\* Peak HR was determined by formal cardiopulmonary exercise testing. Resting HR was also determined at baseline.

One session involved interval training (5 x 1 min progressing towards 10 x 2min) in line with the schedule in Table 1b.

**Table B: Interval Training Schedule**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Number of intervals</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Rest</b>	<b>Target intensity zone (% of HR-reserve*)</b>
1	5	1min	1min	80-90% of HR-reserve
2	5	1.5min	1.5min	80-90% of HR-reserve
3	5	2min	2min	80-90% of HR-reserve
4	6	2min	2min	80-90% of HR-reserve
5	7	2min	2min	80-90% of HR-reserve
6	8	2min	2min	80-90% of HR-reserve
7	9	2min	2min	80-90% of HR-reserve
8	10	2min	2min	80-90% of HR-reserve
9	10	2min	2min	90% of HR-reserve
10	10	2min	2min	90% of HR-reserve
11	10	2min	2min	90% of HR-reserve
12	10	2min	2min	90% of HR-reserve

\* Peak HR was determined by formal cardiopulmonary exercise testing. Resting HR was also determined at baseline.

Sham exercise protocol: (adapted from Barrett et al.<sup>14</sup>)

Generally, this one hour, twice weekly sham exercise intervention did not put any strain on the cardiovascular system, focusing on balance and stretching. Further, it intentionally did not contain any cognitive-motor dual tasking to avoid potentially providing any cognitive training. Also, it did not include complex exercises where patients needed substantial working memory or (sustained) attention. The duration was one hour. Six types of exercises were identified as being appropriate for inclusion: stretches, exercises in crook lying, unilateral exercises in side lying, exercises in prone, exercises in unsupported sitting and exercises in standing.

<p><b>Type 1: Stretches</b> Hamstrings Quadriceps Hip flexors Hip abductors Ankle plantar-flexors</p>	<p><b>Type 2: Exercises in crook lying</b> Bridging (two legs/single leg) Trunk rotation Pelvic tilt Unilateral hip abduction Bilateral hip abduction Hip and knee flexion/extension</p>	<p><b>Type 3: Exercises in side lying</b> Unilateral hip abduction Unilateral hip lateral rotation Unilateral hip abduction/lateral rotation Unilateral knee flexion/extension</p>
<p><b>Type 4: Exercises in prone</b> Unilateral hip extension Unilateral/bilateral knee flexion Bilateral isometric gluteal contraction Unilateral/bilateral hip rotation</p>	<p><b>Type 5: Exercises in unsupported sitting</b> Anterior/posterior pelvic tilt Trunk rotation Forward trunk flexion Unilateral trunk extension (reach out of base of support) Unilateral knee extension/flexion Unilateral hip abduction Bilateral hip abduction</p>	<p><b>Type 6: Exercises in standing</b> Squats (two legs/single leg) Step-ups onto low step. Balancing on one leg (single-leg stance) Sideways stepping Backwards stepping Balancing in step-stance Lateral reaching out of base of support</p>

Format/duration: A standardized (minimal) progression of exercises was undertaken over the 12 weeks to reduce the possible cognitive demand that might be required for dealing with exercise variation. To ensure the exercises were at low HR, they were undertaken with rest periods at a 2:1 ratio to avoid a potential aerobic effect of the sham intervention. Further, the number of consecutive repetitions were low. In line with the EX intervention, the sham session initially commenced at 15-30 min. and ultimately progressed towards 60 min/sessions. The program was further designed to avoid improvements of lower limb muscular strength, as this has been associated with faster processing speed.<sup>15,16</sup>

**Table C. Summary of sham exercise intervention characteristics.**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Duration (in minutes)</b>	<b>Stretching and balance exercises</b>
1	15-20 min	<b>Type 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6</b>
2	20-30min	<b>Type 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6</b>
3	25-35min	<b>Type 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6</b>
4	25-35min	<b>Type 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6</b>
5	25-40min	<b>Type 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6</b>
6	25-40min	<b>Type 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6</b>
7	30-45min	<b>Type 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6</b>
8	30-45min	<b>Type 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6</b>
9	35-50min	<b>Type 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6</b>
10	40-55min	<b>Type 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6</b>
11	45-60min	<b>Type 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6</b>
12	45-60min	<b>Type 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6</b>

### CogEx study endpoints.

Outcome	Measurement(s)	Primary/secondary
<b>Cognitive</b>		
SDMT <sup>17</sup>	Information processing speed	*Primary
CVLT <sup>18</sup>	Verbal memory	**Secondary
BVMT-R <sup>19</sup>	Visual memory	**Secondary
<b>Physical</b>		
Accelerometer <sup>20</sup> (derived from ActiGraph wearable device)	Average % of wear time in MVPA	**Secondary
IET <sup>21</sup> (synonymous with CPET)	VO <sub>2</sub> peak (mL/kg/min); Peak Watts, Peak Heart Rate	**Secondary
CMI <sup>22</sup>	DT cost (motor); DT cost (cognitive)	**Secondary
6MWT <sup>23</sup>	Total distance walked in meters in the 6-minute period	**Secondary
<b>Patient reported outcomes (PROs)</b>		
HADS <sup>24</sup>	Anxiety and depression	**Secondary
FAMS <sup>25</sup>	Assessment of Global Function	**Secondary
EQ-5D-5L <sup>26</sup>	Quality of Life (generic)	**Secondary
MSIS-29-V2 <sup>27</sup>	Impact of Multiple Sclerosis	**Secondary
MSWS-12 <sup>28</sup>	Subjective impact of walking	**Secondary
PDQ-20 <sup>29</sup>	Subjective cognitive difficulties	**Secondary
MFIS <sup>30</sup>	Fatigue	**Secondary
<b>‡ MRI</b>		
Functional (Go/No-Go <sup>31</sup> task and resting state)	Task activation along with reaction times, omission errors, commission errors, and correct responses. RS functional connectivity	**Secondary
Structural	Brain T2-hyperintense and T1-hypointense lesion volume, WMV, GMV, Hipp v, Thal V.	**Secondary

SDMT=Symbol digit modalities test; CVLT=California verbal learning test; Brief visuospatial memory test – revised; MVPA=free-living moderate-to-vigorous physical activity; VO<sub>2</sub> peak=peak oxygen uptake; IET=Incremental exercise test; CPET=Cardiopulmonary Exercise Test; HR=heart rate; CMI=Cognitive motor interference; DT=dual task; nr=number; 6MWT=six minute walk test; HADS=Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale; FAMS= Functional Assessment of Multiple Sclerosis; EQ5D-5=European Quality of Life-5 Dimensions; MSIS-29-V2=Multiple Sclerosis Impact Scale; MSWS-12=Multiple Sclerosis Walking Scale-12; PDQ=Perceived Deficits Questionnaire; MFIS= Modified Fatigue Impact Scale; RS=resting state; WMV=white matter volume; GMV=Gray matter volume; Hipp v=Hippocampus volume; Thal V=Thalamus volume.

\* The primary outcome of the study is the change in processing speed at immediate post -12 weeks, assessed with the SDMT.

\*\*All secondary outcomes will be assessed during the in-person interview or baseline assessment, at the post 12-week assessment and at the 6 month follow-up assessment (apart from accelerometer data at 6 month).

‡ MRI data, not included in this report.

**Attendance rates**

Treatment Group	Study Status	N	Cognitive Sessions Attended		Exercise Sessions Attended	
			Mean*	Std Dev	Mean*	Std Dev
EX-S + CR-S	Reached End of Study	65	92.2	11.6	91.2	11.6
	Early Termination	10	55.0	40.7	51.2	36.6
EX + CR-S	Reached End of Study	67	92.7	9.4	90.7	12.8
	Early Termination	13	53.5	41.5	50.7	40.3
EX-S + CR	Reached End of Study	73	91.2	14.1	87.6	19.9
	Early Termination	6	59.7	33.9	57.6	32.1
EX + CR	Reached End of Study	67	91.2	9.9	90.3	10.1
	Early Termination	10	44.2	37.3	43.3	37.0

EX=exercise; CR=cognitive rehabilitation; CR-s=sham cognitive rehabilitation; EX-S=sham exercise.

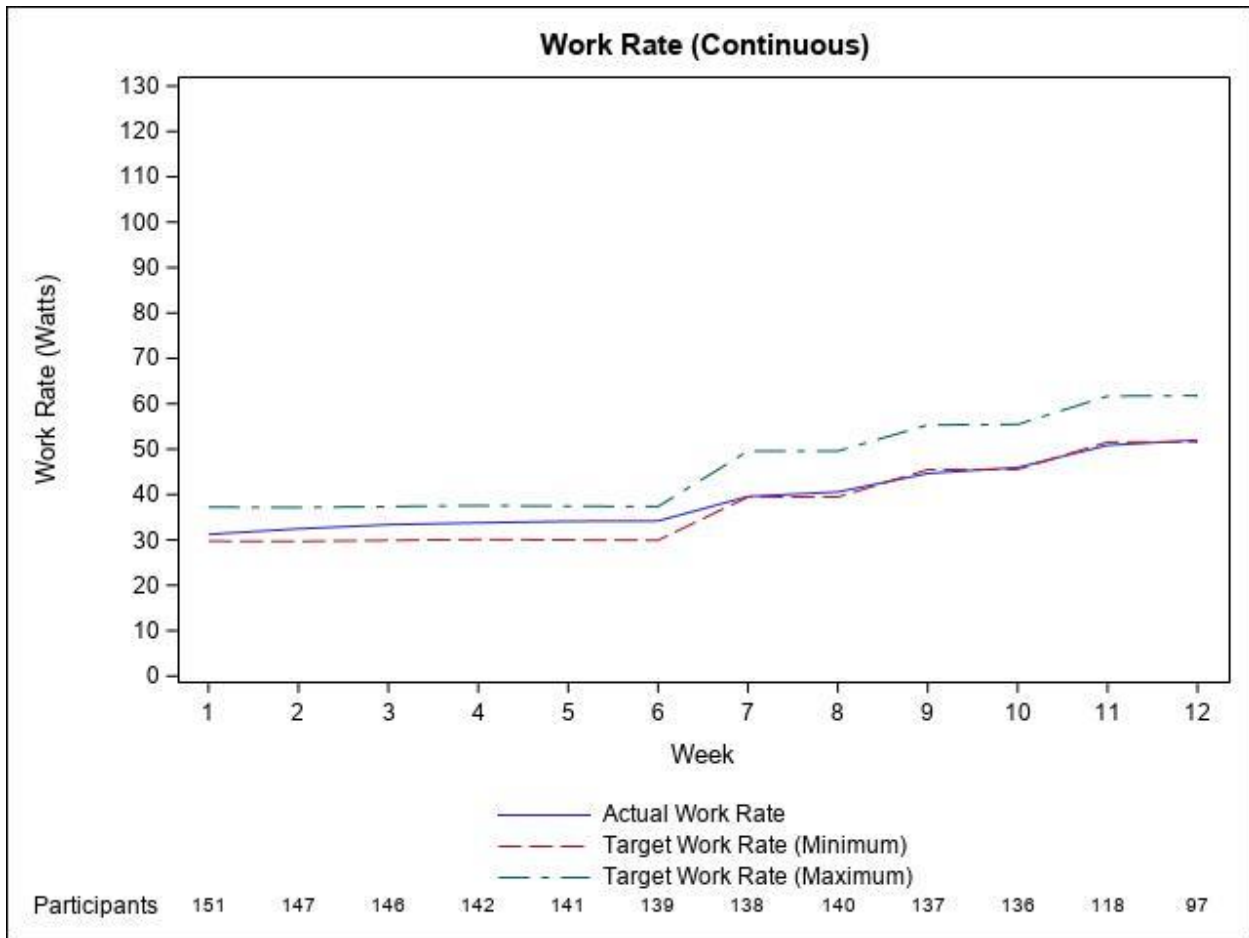
**Average Duration of Cognitive sessions**

Treatment Group	Study Status	N	Mean*	Std Dev
EX-S + CR-S	Reached End of Intervention	65	41.4	3.0
	Early Termination	10	43.3	4.1
EX + CR-S	Reached End of Intervention	67	41.9	3.1
	Early Termination	13	40.3	1.6
EX-S + CR	Reached End of Intervention	73	42.0	2.9
	Early Termination	6	41.2	4.6
EX + CR	Reached End of Intervention	67	41.8	3.7
	Early Termination	10	41.7	2.5

EX=exercise; CR=cognitive rehabilitation; CR-s=sham cognitive rehabilitation; EX-S=sham exercise.

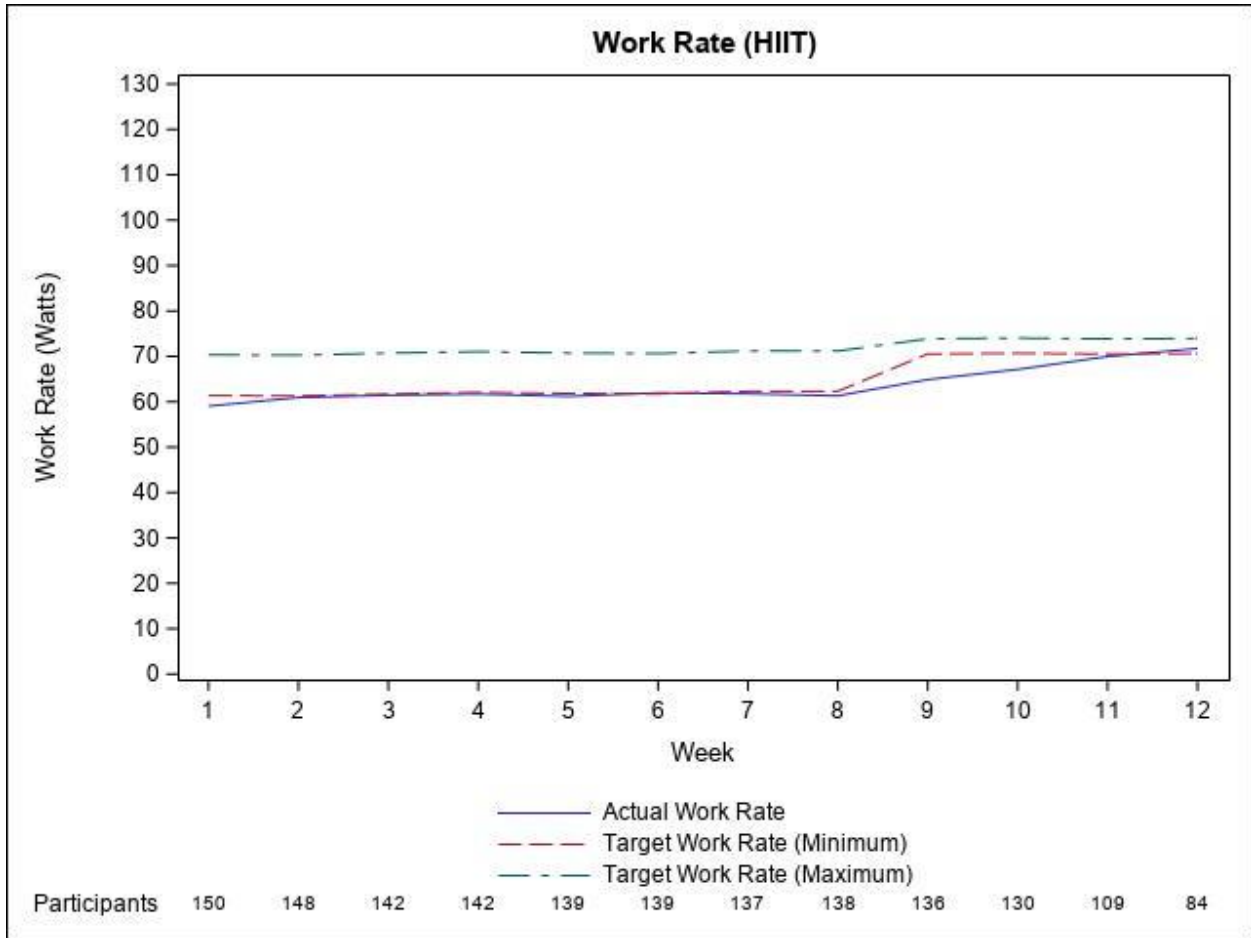


**Work rate for continuous exercise, recorded over 12 weeks**



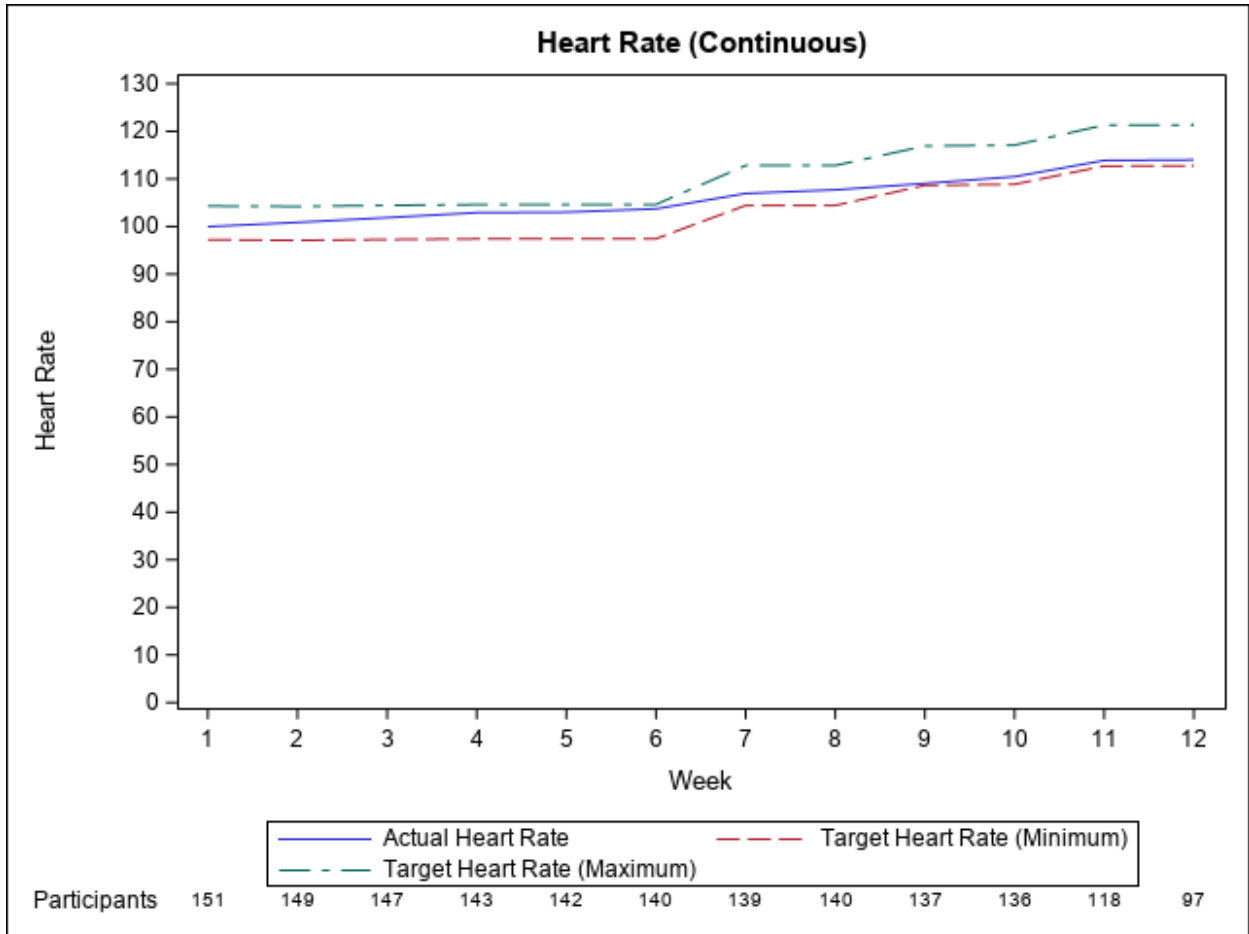
The figure depicts the work rate target zone (red line: lower limit target work rate; green line: upper limit target work rate) and the actual work rate (blue line) during continuous exercise for the pooled exercise groups.

**Work rate for high intensity interval training (HIIT) exercise, recorded over 12 weeks**

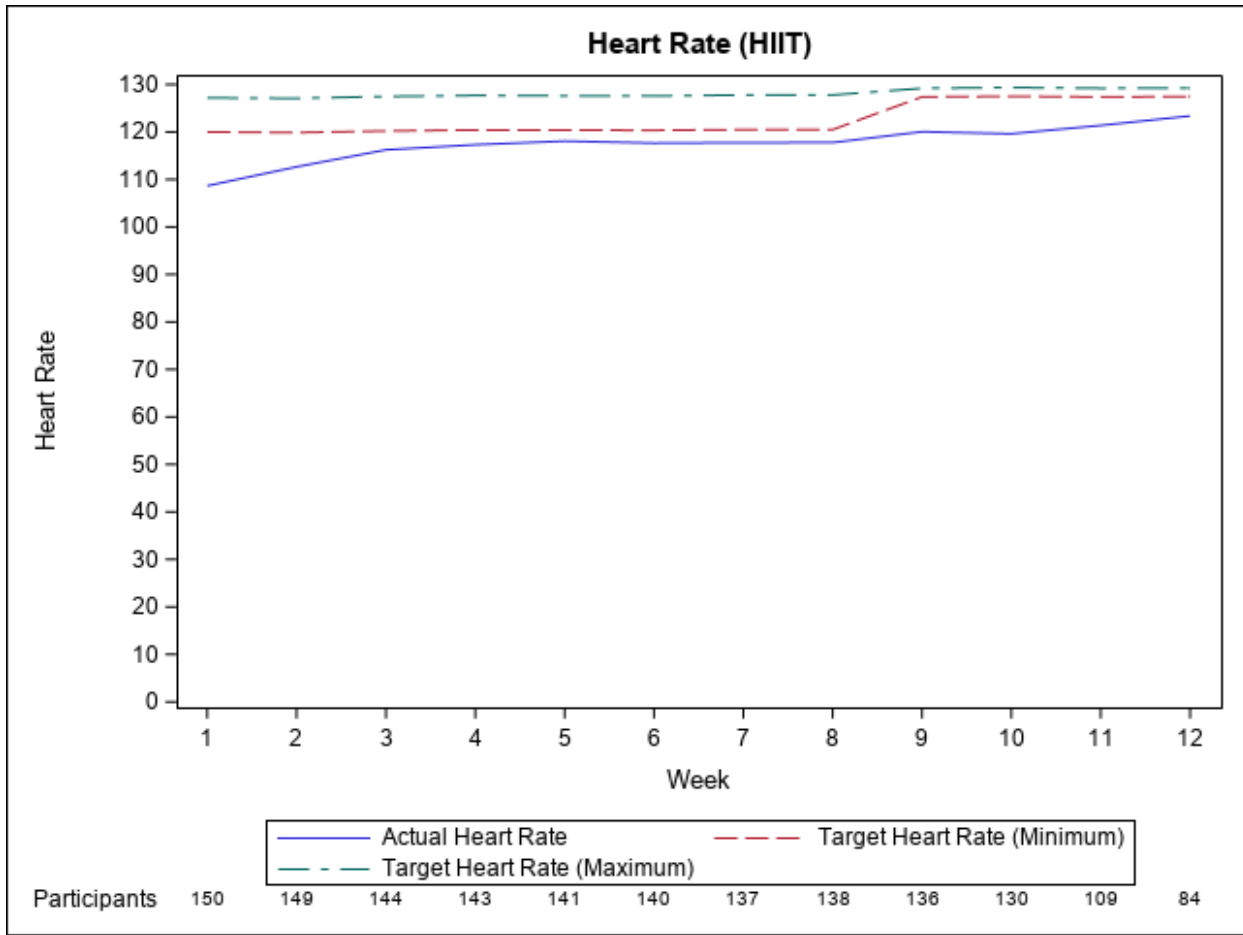


The figure depicts the work rate target zone (red line: lower limit target work rate; green line: upper limit target work rate) and the actual work rate (blue line) during HIIT exercise for the pooled exercise groups.

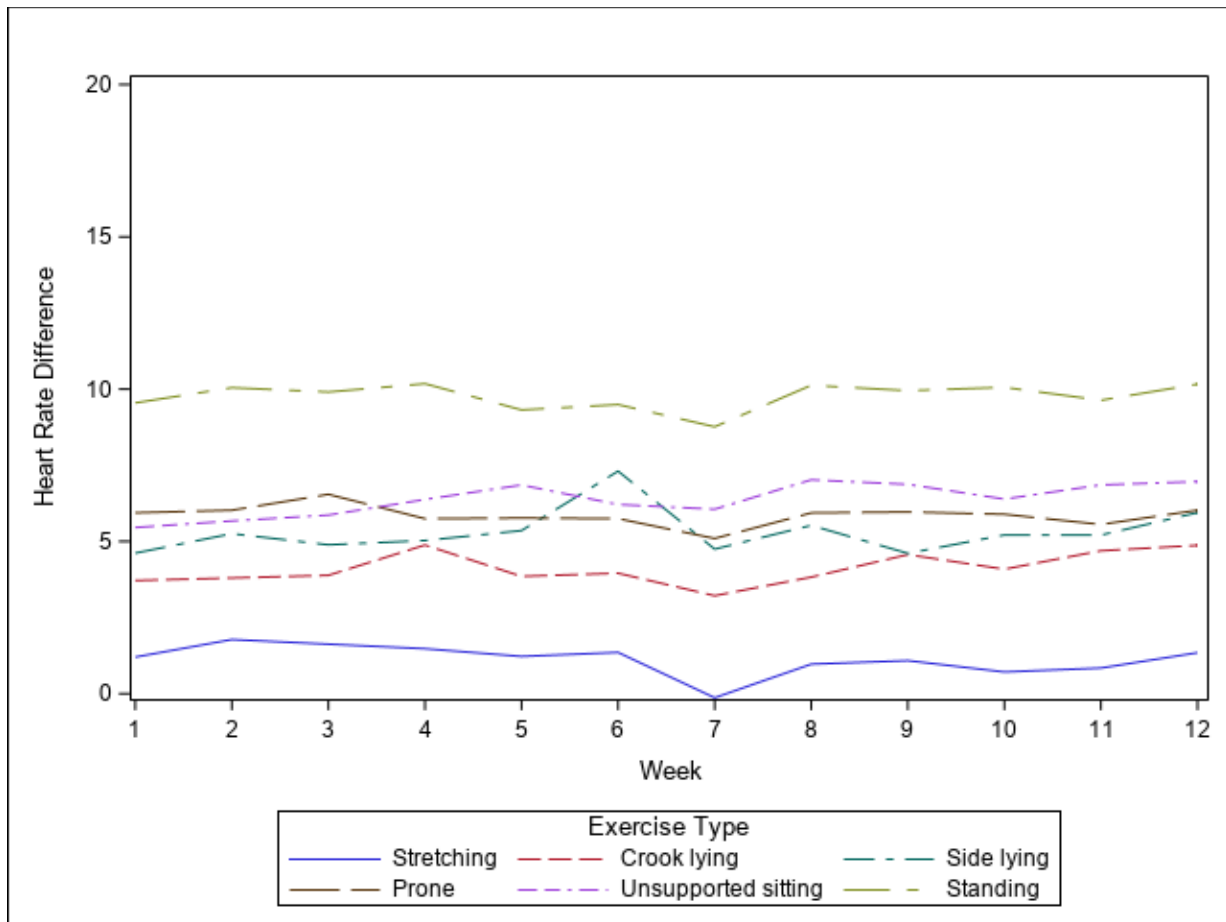
Heart Rate for continuous exercise, recorded over 12 weeks



Heart Rate for high intensity interval training



Exercise sham average heart rate (HR) differences (peak HR – resting HR), recorded over 12 weeks



<b>Adverse events</b>			
<b>Group</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Relationship to intervention</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
EX-S + CR-S	Fell during sham exercise. Not hurt.	Probably related	Resolved.
EX + CR-S	Transient, mild back pain that worsened after exercise session.	Probably related	Condition worsening
EX + CR-S	Transient left knee pain.	Probably related	Resolved
EX + CR	Fatigue and a flare in fibromyalgia following baseline IET.	Probably related	Recovered with minor ongoing pain
EX-S + CR	Transient headache after RehaCom session brought on by image distortion on the computer screen.	Probably related	Resolved
EX-S + CR	Painful, swollen and hot knee.	Possibly related	Ongoing/Continuing treatment
EX + CR-S	Trip and fall with no injury sustained.	Possibly related	Resolved
EX + CR-S	Low back pain	Possibly related	Unknown
EX + CR	Transient thigh pain during the continuous exercise session.	Possibly related	Resolved
EX + CR-S	Dizziness, loss of balance and a fall after completing an exercise session. Unhurt.	Possibly related	Resolved
EX + CR-S	Transient pain in both legs during an exercise session.	Probably related	Resolved
EX-S + CR-S=Exercise-sham plus Cognitive rehabilitation-sham; EX + CR-S=Exercise plus cognitive rehabilitation-sham; EX + CR=Exercise plus cognitive rehabilitation; EX-S + CR=Exercise-sham plus cognitive rehabilitation.			

<b>Serious adverse events</b>			
EX-S + CR	Surgery for knee prosthesis	Unrelated	Hospitalization/Surgery
EX-S + CR	Exacerbation in symptoms possibly caused by humid and hot weather.	Unrelated	Hospitalization.
EX-S + CR-S	Urinary tract infection	Unrelated	Hospitalization/antibiotic medication
EX-S + CR	Fall at home home causing lumber spine fractures.	Unrelated	Hospitalization/Behavioral/lifestyle
EX + CR	Syncope with loss of consciousness. Further frequent panic attacks	Unrelated	Hospitalization/Medication change
EX-S + CR	Surgery for knee prosthesis	Unrelated	Hospitalization/Surgery
EX-S + CR-S=Exercise-sham plus Cognitive rehabilitation-sham; EX + CR-S=Exercise plus cognitive rehabilitation-sham; EX + CR=Exercise plus cognitive rehabilitation; EX-S + CR=Exercise-sham plus cognitive rehabilitation.			

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