A facilitated home-based cardiac rehabilitation intervention for people with heart failure and their caregivers: a research programme including the REACH-HF RCT

Hasnain M Dalal,1,2* Rod S Taylor,1,3 Jennifer Wingham,1 Colin J Greaves,4 Kate Jolly,5 Chim C Lang,6 Russell C Davis,7 Karen M Smith,8 Patrick J Doherty,9 Jackie Miles,10 Robin van Lingen,11 Fiona C Warren,1 Susannah Sadler,1 Charles Abraham,1,12 Nicky Britten,1 Julia Frost,1 Melvyn Hillsdon,13 Sally Singh,14 Christopher Hayward,15 Victoria Eyre16 and Kevin Paul1,2

1Institute of Health Research, University of Exeter Medical School, Exeter, UK
2Research and Development, Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust, Truro, UK
3Professor of Population, Institute of Health and Wellbeing, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, UK
4School of Sport, Exercise and Rehabilitation Sciences, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK
5Institute of Applied Health Research, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK
6School of Medicine, University of Dundee, Ninewells Hospital and Medical School, Dundee, UK
7Cardiology Department, Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust, Birmingham, UK
8Cardiac Rehabilitation Office, Ninewells Hospital, Dundee, UK
9Department of Health Sciences, University of York, York, UK
10Research and Development, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, St Woolos Hospital, Newport, UK
11Duchy Hospital, Truro, UK
12School of Psychological Sciences, University of Melbourne, Victoria, VIC, Australia
13Sport and Health Sciences, University of Exeter, Exeter, UK
14Centre for Exercise and Rehabilitation Science, University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust, Glenfield Hospital, Leicester, UK
15Peninsula Clinical Trials Unit, University of Plymouth, Plymouth, UK
16Re:Cognition Health, London, UK

*Corresponding author h.dalal@nhs.net
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Plain English summary

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Heart failure can be classified by the percentage of blood pushed out of the left ventricle when the heart beats – the 'ejection fraction'. Half of all people with heart failure have heart failure with reduced ejection fraction (ejection fraction of < 45%) and the rest have heart failure with preserved ejection fraction (ejection fraction of ≥ 45%).

Rehabilitation for people with heart failure improves their quality of life and reduces hospital admissions. Most rehabilitation has taken place in groups in hospital settings, but poor levels of participation mean that alternative ways of accessing rehabilitation, such as home-based programmes, are recommended.

The Rehabilitation Enablement in Chronic Heart Failure (REACH-HF) intervention comprises three printed components: (1) an 'HF Manual' with information for patients and an exercise programme, (2) a 'Family and Friends Resource' for caregivers and (3) a 'Progress Tracker' booklet for patients to chart their progress. The programme is delivered by trained nurses or physiotherapists.

We carried out two studies of the REACH-HF intervention. In our main trial, we allocated at random 216 people with heart failure with reduced ejection fraction from four UK centres to receive the REACH-HF intervention or usual medical care alone. The results of this study suggest that those who received the REACH-HF intervention had a better quality of life. Economic modelling demonstrated that the intervention is well within the willingness-to-pay limits recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. However, the economics analysis from the full trial did not show significant differences between the two groups in hospital admissions. The cost of the intervention was £418 per patient.

We also undertook a pilot trial of the same design in a single centre in 50 patients with heart failure with preserved ejection fraction. The findings of this pilot study showed that the intervention and study design were well accepted and these results support a future full trial of REACH-HF in patients with heart failure with preserved ejection fraction.
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