



Cyprus
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Doctoral Dissertation

**THE IMPACT OF IN-PHASE BILATERAL UPPER LIMB
EXERCISES IN PEOPLE WITH MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS**

Dimitris Sokratous

Limassol, April 2025

CYPRUS UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF REHABILITATION SCIENCES

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Approval Form

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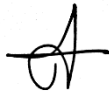
THE IMPACT OF IN-PHASE BILATERAL UPPER LIMB EXERCISES IN PEOPLE WITH MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

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Acknowledgements.

These PhD years have been truly transformative, shaping me both personally and professionally as a scientist and health professional. This incredible journey would not have been possible without the support of some exceptional personalities.

I am deeply grateful to my supervisor, Dr. Nikos Konstantinou, who has been a mentor, role model, and friend since the beginning of my postgraduate studies. His skills, dedication, and guidance have been crucial to my success and have helped me become an independent researcher.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to Dr. Charalambos Costa Charalambous. His steadfast support and enthusiasm were essential throughout these years. He has been not only a brilliant academic advisor but also a good friend.

Special thanks go to my colleagues at The Cyprus Institute of Neurology and Genetics, particularly Dr. Eleni Zamba Papanicolaou, Dr. Kyriaki Michailidou and Dr. Christiana Christodoulou, as well as to Dr. Elena Papacosta board member of the Cyprus Sports Organization, whose contributions were critical to the completion of my thesis. I also deeply appreciate the trust and efforts of all the patients in my research studies.

I am also grateful to my fellow PhD travelers, Artemis Traikapi and Phivos Phylactou, at The Brain and Cognitive Science lab, in the rehabilitation clinic of the Cyprus University of Technology. Collaborating with them was both rewarding and inspiring.

Above all, I owe my deepest thanks to my wife, whose patience and understanding sustained me through the challenges of this journey.

Finally, this thesis is dedicated to my son, Stylianos Sokratous, who, at 8 years old, has been a source of motivation without even realizing it. Many days, we sat side by side at the same table—he working on his Greek and primary school mathematics, and I analyzing data and writing my PhD thesis. After finishing his work while I was still working, he would often ask, *“Dad, how hard are your lessons? I finished before you, so must be smarter than you!”*

To my dear Stylianos: I truly hope you grow to be much smarter than me and achieve all your dreams. I hope that this shared journey and the lessons learned along the way will serve as a guiding light and inspiration for you in everything you do.

ABSTRACT

Multiple Sclerosis is an autoimmune disease of the central nervous system, marked by relapses, progressive neurological deterioration, or both. The predominant clinical symptoms include motor dysfunction and cognitive deficits. Relapsing-Remitting Multiple Sclerosis primarily involves motor impairments due to corticospinal tract dysfunction, while Progressive Multiple Sclerosis is associated with significant cognitive and motor decline, often beginning with cognitive processing deficits often appearing first. This thesis examined the effects of in-phase bilateral upper limb exercises on neurophysiological, cognitive, and clinical outcomes in people with Multiple Sclerosis. A 12-week program (30 – 60 minutes/session, three sessions/week) incorporated sports-based and functional motor training. Two clinical trials were conducted across different phenotypes of Multiple Sclerosis. The first clinical trial study used a single-case design with one Relapsing-Remitting Multiple Sclerosis participant, followed by a multiple baseline study with five participants. Visual and statistical analyses assessed intervention effects on corticospinal plasticity, motor and cognitive measures. The second clinical trial study included 20 participants with Progressive Multiple Sclerosis allocated into an experimental group performing in-phase bilateral exercises and into an active control group following conventional exercises. Motor and cognitive improvements were observed using repeated measures ANOVA with Post Hoc Bonferroni corrections. Results showed bilateral reductions in resting motor threshold, measured by Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation, and improvements in motor and cognitive functions in Relapsing-Remitting Multiple Sclerosis. In Progressive Multiple Sclerosis, the experimental group showed significant improvement in motor and cognitive functions compared to the active control group. These findings suggest that in-phase bilateral exercises enhance cortical excitability in Relapsing-Remitting Multiple Sclerosis and improve motor and cognitive functions across people with Multiple Sclerosis in general. This thesis supports in-phase bilateral exercises as an effective neurorehabilitation strategy. Further research should refine methodologies to maximize intervention efficacy.

Keywords: Multiple Sclerosis, corticospinal plasticity, Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation, cognitive processing in-phase bilateral, exercise