This study concludes that Nordic Poles (NP) immediately enables patients with intermittent claudication (IC) to walk further. The authors are to be congratulated for these interesting results. Current treatment of IC is based on risk factor management and exercise therapy. As mentioned by the authors, long term studies suggest that NP walking (NPW) improves walking ability better than normal walking although the level of evidence is still low. Although in theory walking training is easily available, supervised walking training has suboptimal compliance in our experience. Could NPW improve compliance?

The present authors conclude that NP immediately enables patients with IC to walk further. Are these results generalizable to most patients with IC? Conclusions are based on 20 patients, normal distribution may not be expected. So what patients were included? All patients visited the vascular clinic for stable IC with symptoms of variable severity: some patients could walk for 20 min at 4% gradient. All patients had infra-inguinal disease not amenable to straightforward intervention. It is not clear whether there was any selection in the form of patients visiting the vascular clinic that were not included because, e.g., the patient did not think he could manage or did not wish to try NPW. All study patients practiced NPW until the research team and the patient were confident that they mastered the technique. One patient was excluded due to problems with NPW. The remaining 20 consecutive patients mastered the technique. This may not necessarily be the case in other IC populations.

If the effects of NP are demonstrated also in larger studies in other IC patient populations NPW may deserve a wider application as treatment for IC. Today, the generalizability of the present results and mechanisms of action are not clear. Since blinding is impossible for a study like this, patient information about the potential merits of NP before testing could influence the results. NPW recruits other muscle groups than normal walking. Recently, normal walking and NPW was found to improve

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similarly health-enhancing physical fitness\(^1\) and no differ-
ence in the extent of cardiac output up-regulation at
a given level of physical exertion was found.\(^2\) The present
authors suggest that NPW might improve cardiovascular
fitness in IC patients by an enhanced mood in pole walkers
encouraging a more active lifestyle. In summary, the
present results are interesting. From an evidence-based
medicine point of view the level of evidence for NPW as
treatment for IC is still rather low. As mentioned by the
authors, further studies are needed and hopefully stimu-
lated by the present results.

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