Efficacy of functional relaxation and patient education in the treatment of somatoform heart disorders: a randomized, controlled clinical investigation.

BACKGROUND: Recurrent heart problems and, especially, chest pain in the absence of somatic heart disease is a common finding, although challenging to treat. OBJECTIVE: The authors assessed a body-oriented approach to the somatic fixation frequently seen in these patients. METHOD: They conducted a controlled study to assess the effect of functional relaxation in 22 patients with non-specific chest pain. The primary outcome measures were self-reported changes on the subscales Somatization and Anxiety of the Symptom Checklist of Derogatis, as well as the subscale Cardiovascular Complaints of the Giessen Inventory of Complaints. RESULTS: Significant improvements of the primary outcome measures were observed in patients treated with functional relaxation, whereas no significant improvements could be seen in the control group. CONCLUSION: Functional relaxation appears to be a safe and effective, non-pharmacological approach in the treatment of non-specific chest pain.