Higher participation in physical activity is associated with less use of inpatient mental health services: A cross-sectional study

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Higher participation in physical activity is associated with less use of inpatient mental health services: A cross-sectional study.

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Abstract

There is a stark disparity in the physical health of people with mental illness compared to those without mental illness, resulting in shorter life expectancy and increased rates of preventable deaths. Physical activity has previously been shown to have a positive impact on various markers of mental health and has been linked with a reduction in hospital admissions for those with chronic physical illness. The purpose of this study was to investigate whether there is a relationship between physical activity and the number of days spent admitted to acute inpatient mental health wards in people with enduring mental illness. Eighty participants from four acute mental health wards in Oxfordshire, UK were included. Subjective and objective measurements of physical activity levels were collected alongside the amount of days spent admitted on acute mental health wards over the year previous. Participants who recorded higher levels of physical activity, both subjectively and objectively, were found to have spent less time admitted to acute mental health services. With a significant negative correlation found, future research should aim to investigate any causative link between physical activity and mental health admission.

Key words: Exercise, physical health, admission, depression, schizophrenia, bipolar.

1. Introduction

It is well documented in previous literature that there is a stark disparity in the physical health of people with mental illness when compared to the general population. This leads to higher rates of morbidity (Crump et al., 2013; Vancampfort et al., 2016; Correll et al., 2017) and early death in this patient group (Health and Social Care Information Centre 2009). As a result, there is a growing evidence base on this topic with many studies showing that lifestyle factors, such as diet, sedentary behaviour and physical activity, play a large role in the cause of this disparity. Sedentary behaviours and a lack of exercise in people with mental illness has been identified previously (Strohle, A., 2009; Soundy et al., 2013; Stubbs et al., 2016). The risk and severity of lifestyle associated physical illness have been shown to reduce with the inclusion of healthy lifestyle interventions, with physical activity at the heart of those
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