



Other Abstracts

Critical Appraisal and Systematic Review of the Effectiveness of Exercise in Patients with Depression

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Introduction:

There has been a growing literature on the psychological benefits of exercise therapy towards depression (Babyak, 2000). It was shown that exercise therapy was inexpensive and convenient; patient could perform exercise activities whenever they wanted (Burbach, 1997). Lawlor & Hopker (2001) indicated that exercise produced a large decrease in depression symptoms when compared with no treatment. Moreover, it was suggested that aerobic exercise helped to minimize depressive symptoms faster than antidepressants medications alone (Dimeo, 2001).

Purpose of the Project:

To systematically review the effects of exercise therapy on depression among the adults by consolidating the up-to-date evidence ever published in the literature.

Methodology:

We searched: Medline (1966-2006); CINAHL (1982-2006); PsycINFO (1906-2006); EMBASE (1980-2006) and EBM Reviews-Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews (till 2006). Abstracts of studies identified from the computerized databases were read and full text of potential studies were retrieved and screened. Some relevant journals were hand-searched. The bibliographies of all retrieved studies were also searched for additional studies. Unpublished and on-going trials were requested from authors and field experts.

Selection Criteria:

Randomized controlled trials of exercise therapy for depression where participants were (a) Adults, mainly the youth and middle aged adult; (b) Diagnosed with depression or dysthymia by either Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th edition (DSM-IV) or Research Diagnostic Criteria (RDC); (c) Medically fit. Participants must have been screened to exclude those with other psychiatric diagnosis, medical contraindication or receiving other medications.

Main Results:

A total 317 participants were involved in 7 included studies. The sample sizes of included studies ranged from 17 to 80. The result demonstrated that participants who engaged in aerobic exercise, especially running, would get lower scores in Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) or Hamilton Rating Scale of Depression (HRSD) or other similar well-known instruments for depression when compared with those who did not exercise. Running was adopted as exercise therapy in 6 of the 7 included studies in this systematic review. This review also suggested that exercise therapy was as effective as psychotherapy and it could be a monotherapy for mild and moderate depressive disorder.

Conclusions:

Running is an effective monotherapy for depressive patients in comparison with psychotherapy. The suitable exercise regime is that the patients should run for twice weekly with 30 minutes for each session and for eight weeks.