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Oral Presentation

The Impact of Physical Activity on Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

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Abstract

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) occurs following exposure to potentially traumatic experiences such as those regularly encountered by emergency service workers (police, ambulance and firemen/women) and servicemen/women. PTSD is associated with high rates of somatic comorbidities including metabolic syndrome contributing to an excess mortality rate due to preventable cardiovascular diseases. Interventions targeting physical activity have repeatedly been shown to be efficacious in the augmentative treatment of a range of mental disorders including major depressive disorder, anxiety disorders and schizophrenia while simultaneously improving physical health problems, yet relatively few studies have investigated the specific impact on PTSD. This talk aims to provide an overview of the available literature regarding physical activity and PTSD with specific reference to the first published clinical trial of exercise for severe PTSD, conducted in Sydney, Australia. Results from a recent meta-analysis of four unique RCTs (n = 200) will also be discussed as well as implications for clinical practice and future research. Based on the available evidence, there is reason to be optimistic regarding the role of physical activity interventions as a feasible and scalable component of treatment for PTSD.

Keywords: Physical activity, Depressive disorder, Posttraumatic stress disorder

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