Physical activity as medicine: time to translate evidence into clinical practice

Mai-Lis Hellénius,1 Carl Johan Sundberg2

The prescription can be used for prevention and/or treatment. All healthcare professionals can prescribe physical activity. It is essential that the prescription be based on the individual situation and on a dialogue between patient and clinician. The written prescription is usually made on a special prescription form.

A Swedish study in primary healthcare on patients receiving physical activity on prescription demonstrated good adherence after 6 months. A majority of patients reported adhering fully to the prescription (65%). Partial adherence was reported by 19% and only 16% reported total non-adherence.7 The results are encouraging given that many patients with chronic diseases have difficulties adhering to prescribed regimens in general.

ARE WE PREPARED?

There is an urgent need to spread new evidence on physical activity as well as evidence on how to promote physical activity. Physical Activity in the Prevention and Treatment of Disease, featured on the cover of this issue of BJSM, is a comprehensive handbook recently translated into a special prescription form.

The method has proven to be a feasible professional with symptoms or diseases where physical activity on prescription has been in use for decades in Sweden New Zealand and elsewhere. Physical activity on prescription is a personalised written prescription of physical activity for any kind of patients visiting a health professional with symptoms or diseases where physical activity would improve health.

The last decade has also provided strong data that counselling on physical activity in healthcare is effective. A systematic literature review concluded that advice and counselling of patients in everyday clinical practice increased physical activity by 12–50% for at least 6 months after the counselling session.2

THE DRUG OF CHOICE: EXERCISE ON PRESCRIPTION

Over recent years, ‘physical activity on prescription’ has proven to be a feasible way to increase an individual’s or patient’s physical activity levels.3–6 The method has been in use for decades in Sweden New Zealand and elsewhere. Physical activity on prescription is a personalised written prescription of physical activity for any kind of patients visiting a health professional with symptoms or diseases where physical activity would improve health.

Follow-up investigations of large cohorts of men and women in USA demonstrate that a low cardiorespiratory fitness constitutes the largest attributable fraction for all cause death.1 These findings are highly relevant for a majority of populations all over the world. Sedentary lifestyle is a dangerous modern health threat. Physical inactivity is linked to almost all common health problems including cardiovascular diseases, type II diabetes, obesity/overweight, cancer, dementia and depression. Furthermore, the great value of physical activity in the prevention and treatment of disease has been proven over recent years. Physical activity is essential for improved health as well as for longevity.

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REFERENCES


