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

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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 English. A systematic literature review concluded that advice and prescribed physical activity for any professional with symptoms or diseases where physical activity would improve health.1

The book covers most areas of disease where physical activity has a documented effect. By combining recommendations on suitable exercise activities with a description of the potential risks of physical activity for various patient groups, the handbook provides a valuable resource for anyone working with physical activity and health. The handbook consists of 47 chapters. Fourteen of these address general aspects such as the effects of physical activity, how to motivate individuals, how to assess and control physical activity and chapters on physical activity for paediatric, pregnant and older populations. The other 33 chapters address the effects of and recommendations for physical activity in diseases and conditions within cardiovascular and metabolic medicine, psychiatry, orthopaedics, neurology, gastroenterology, nephrology, rheumatology, pulmonary medicine and more. The handbook is especially tailored to help health professionals prescribe physical activity. The method is currently used by well over half of all general practice units in Sweden; our international colleagues see no reason why that should not be the case in many parts of the world. The book (in English) is available for personal use from http://www.fyss.se as a pdf-file.

REFERENCES