

EFFECTS OF A PHYSICAL EXERCISE PROGRAM IN PATIENTS DIAGNOSED WITH SCHIZOPHRENIA

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Objectives: To report the effects of a pilot physical exercise program on the quality of life, physical capacity, psychopathological symptoms, body constitution and biochemical parameters in patients with schizophrenia.

Methods: In October 2013, a protocol was established between the Sports Department of the University of Évora and the Mental Health Department of Espírito Santo Hospital. A pilot study was initiated to promote physical and psychological rehabilitation of schizophrenic outpatients. Ten patients accepted to participate on the present research. The exercise program consisted of 20 training sessions with 60 minutes each, within a 20-week period. All sessions were supervised by a professional on physical activity. Baseline data were collected prior to intervention and include: a) quality of life assessed with the Functional Assessment Staging Scale, with the Brief Symptom Inventory and the Positive and Negative Syndrome Scale b) health related battery of tests; c) body composition with a DXA; d) blood analysis. The same data will be collected by the end of the intervention (June 2014). Initial and final results will be then correlated and used to investigate associations among quantitative independent variables.

Results: By the end of the program (June 2014) it is expected for the participants to show an improvement in physical performance, body composition and the reduction of cardiovascular risk. Concerning psychopathological features, it is expected an improvement in Quality of Life and Functional Assessment, a significant decrease in the Brief Symptom Inventory and in the Positive and Negative Symptom Scale.

Conclusions: Schizophrenia is a disease with serious physical repercussions, caused not only by the disease itself but also because of antipsychotics side effects. This pilot physical exercise program, despite its methodological limitations, emphasized the relevance of including serious mentally ill patients in rehabilitation programs in order to promote the recovery of functional abilities.

References:

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