

Mental health and Physiotherapy

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Abstract:

This study explores the integral role of physiotherapy in the management of psychological conditions, emphasizing the profound mind-body connection. While traditionally associated with physical rehabilitation, physiotherapy significantly mitigates symptoms of anxiety, depression, and stress by utilizing a holistic, bio-psychosocial approach.

Through interventions such as tailored exercise prescription, mindfulness-based movement (e.g., Yoga and Tai Chi), and manual therapy, physiotherapy facilitates the release of mood-enhancing endorphins, improves sleep quality, and boosts self-esteem. Furthermore, it addresses the physical side effects of psychotropic medications and helps patients reconnect with their bodies through improved body awareness. By fostering self-efficacy and empowerment, physiotherapy serves as a vital complement to traditional mental health treatments, offering a comprehensive pathway for individuals with PTSD, chronic pain, and clinical mood disorders to improve their overall well-being.

Introduction:

Mental health involves a crucial balance and harmony between an individual and their surrounding world, encompassing the self and others, as well as the environment. It is about coexisting effectively with these various realities.

A significant link exists between mental and physical well-being: when mental health deteriorates, the body often exhibits clear and measurable physical indicators, which can vary depending on a person's age.

Some warning signs of poor mental health:

Changes in school performance, Poor grades despite strong efforts, Excessive worrying or anxiety, Hyperactivity, Persistent nightmares, Persistent disobedience and/ or aggressive behavior, Frequent temper tantrums, Abuse of drugs and/ or alcohol, Inability to cope with daily problems and activities, Changes in sleeping and / or eating habits, Excessive complaints relating to physical problems, Intense fear of gaining weight, Long-lasting negative mood, often along with poor appetite and thoughts of death and so on.

Existing theories:

Existing theories of mental hygiene and hygiene stem from a range of traditional psychological perspectives (such as psychodynamic, behavioural and cognitive.) and contemporary models that integrate biological, psychological and social factors. Major theoretical categories are: Biomedical theories, Psychodynamic theories, Cognitive theories, Humanistic theories, Modern understanding often combines these perspectives into integrated

models and newer specialized theories like: Biopsychosocial model, Social cognitive theory, Resilience theory, Attachment theory, Intersectionality and queer theories

Hypotheses:

Specialized exercise therapy and pain-focused meditation guided by a physiotherapist can elevate beta-endorphin release, which significantly lowers perceived chronic pain and boosts the psychological well-being of patients with co-occurring mental health issues.

Discussion:

Physiotherapy significantly helps psychological problems by addressing the mind-body connection through exercise, pain management, and body awareness, reducing anxiety, depression, and stress while boosting self-esteem and function, often complementing traditional mental health treatments. Physiotherapists use techniques like exercise prescription, mindfulness, and manual therapy to improve mood, reduce symptoms from psychotropic medications, and empower patients to self-manage their health.

How Physiotherapy Helps

- **Endorphin Release:** Physical activity releases endorphins, improves sleep, and provides a positive distraction from negative thoughts, directly combating symptoms of anxiety and depression and act as natural painkillers.
- **Stress & Anxiety Reduction:** Aerobic exercise, yoga, Tai Chi, and deep breathing exercises directly lower stress and anxiety levels.
- **Improved Moods and Self-Esteem:** Achieving physical milestones and regaining control over movement builds confidence and provides a sense of accomplishment, fostering better self-image.
- **Better Sleep:** Regular physical activity improves sleep quality, which is crucial for mental health.
- **Counteracting Medication Side Effects:** Physiotherapy can help manage physical symptoms (like weight gain or reduced mobility) caused by some psychotropic medications.
- **Mind-Body Connection:** Techniques like mindfulness and addressing dissociation help reconnect patients with their bodies, improving overall well-being.
- **Empowerment:** Learning to manage physical health fosters a sense of control and self-efficacy.

Specific Physiotherapy Techniques Used

- **Exercise Programs:** Tailored aerobic, strength, and flexibility training. Tailored workouts improve mood and function
- **Mindfulness & Body Awareness Exercises:** Yoga, Tai Chi, Qi Gong, and specific breathing exercises. To improve connection to the self.
- **Lifestyle & Weight Management Advice:** Supports overall health.
- **Manual Therapy & Massage:** Reduces physical tension that often accompanies psychological distress.
- **Graded Activity:** Gradually increasing physical activity to build tolerance and confidence

By focusing on movement and physical function, physiotherapy provides a powerful, non-pharmacological tool to support mental health and recovery.

Who Benefits

- ✓ Individuals with diagnosed mental health conditions like depression, anxiety, and PTSD.
- ✓ People experiencing stress, low mood, or feeling overwhelmed.
- ✓ Those with chronic physical conditions whose mental health is also impacted.

By taking a holistic bio-psychosocial approach, physiotherapy treats the whole person, making it a valuable part of a comprehensive mental health care plan.

Conclusion:

The most common forms of mental health interventions used by physiotherapists in the literature are CBT techniques, usually in the form of graded activity, graded exercise, or graded exposure. These techniques are most often combined with physiotherapy exercise programmes to treat people with chronic low back pain or chronic pain. Future research should focus on providing more comprehensive descriptions of training protocols and interventions so that other clinicians can integrate them into their clinical practice. Studies on the use of mental health strategies in physiotherapy for other chronic conditions and for primary and secondary prevention could be fruitful.

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