



# Acta Medica Europa

## Physical Activity and Depression

Lee Chang <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Psychologist, Beijing, China

Dear Editor,

Depression, a debilitating mental health condition impacting millions globally, casts a long shadow over well-being. While pharmacological and therapeutic interventions remain crucial, recent research reveals a powerful, accessible, and often overlooked ally in the fight against depression: physical activity. This letter explores the intricate link between movement and mood, advocating for the integration of physical activity into comprehensive depression management strategies. The evidence is compelling. Numerous studies demonstrate the positive impact of physical activity on depression symptoms. Engaging in regular exercise, regardless of intensity or duration, has been shown to reduce depressive symptoms, improve mood, and enhance overall mental well-being. The mechanisms underlying this beneficial effect are multifaceted, ranging from neurochemical changes in the brain to improved self-esteem and social interaction (1-4).

For individuals struggling with depression, the prospect of initiating or maintaining physical activity can feel daunting. However, emphasizing small, attainable goals and gradual increases in activity level can pave the way for sustainable change. Encouraging enjoyable activities like walking, swimming, or dancing, and fostering a supportive environment like group exercise classes, can further enhance motivation and adherence. The benefits of physical activity extend beyond symptom reduction. Regular exercise can prevent depression relapse, improve long-term mental health outcomes, and contribute to overall physical health. This makes it a valuable part of comprehensive depression management strategies alongside other evidence-based interventions. However, integrating physical activity into depression care requires a collaborative approach. Healthcare professionals need to be equipped to assess physical activity levels, provide tailored exercise recommendations, and address potential barriers to participation. Collaboration with physical therapists, exercise specialists, and community-based programs can further strengthen patient support and promote long-term success. Furthermore, research efforts focused on optimizing exercise

interventions for diverse populations with depression, understanding the underlying mechanisms of action, and exploring the potential of technology-based solutions to support physical activity can significantly advance the field (3-7).

In conclusion, the role of physical activity in alleviating depression and promoting mental well-being is undeniable. By raising awareness, integrating exercise into treatment plans, and fostering a supportive environment, we can empower individuals to step towards hope, one movement at a time. In doing so, we can add a powerful tool to the mental health toolbox, contributing to a future where depression's shadow is eclipsed by the light of well-being.

### REFERENCES

1. Kandola A, Ashdown-Franks G, Hendrikse J, Sabiston CM, Stubbs B. Physical activity and depression: Towards understanding the antidepressant mechanisms of physical activity. *Neurosci Biobehav Rev.* 2019;107:525-539. doi:10.1016/j.neubiorev.2019.09.040
2. Pearce M, Garcia L, Abbas A, et al. Association Between Physical Activity and Risk of Depression: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis. *JAMA Psychiatry.* 2022;79(6):550-559. doi:10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2022.0609
3. Choi KW, Chen CY, Stein MB, et al. Assessment of Bidirectional Relationships Between Physical Activity and Depression Among Adults: A 2-Sample Mendelian Randomization Study [published correction appears in *JAMA Psychiatry.* 2023 Oct 1;80(10):1078]. *JAMA Psychiatry.* 2019;76(4):399-408. doi:10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2018.4175
4. Paluska SA, Schwenk TL. Physical activity and mental health: current concepts. *Sports Med.* 2000;29(3):167-180. doi:10.2165/00007256-200029030-00003
5. Chen C, Beaunoyer E, Guitton MJ, Wang J. Physical Activity as a Clinical Tool against Depression: Opportunities and Challenges. *J Integr Neurosci.* 2022;21(5):132. doi:10.31083/j.jin2105132
6. Carek PJ, Laibstain SE, Carek SM. Exercise for the treatment of depression and anxiety. *Int J Psychiatry Med.* 2011;41(1):15-28. doi:10.2190/PM.41.1.c
7. Phillips C. Brain-Derived Neurotrophic Factor, Depression, and Physical Activity: Making the Neuroplastic Connection. *Neural Plast.* 2017;2017:7260130. doi:10.1155/2017/7260130

Received: 1 December 2022, Accepted: 4 December 2022, Published: 8 December 2022

Corresponding author: Lee Chang, Psychologist, Beijing, China. psychology.world96@gmail.com

This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).