Author's response to reviews

Title: Exercise therapy in adults with serious mental illness: systematic review and meta-analysis.

Authors:

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Version: 3 Date: 21 March 2014

Author's response to reviews: see over
Reviewer's report 1
Title: Exercise therapy in adults with serious mental illness: systematic review and meta-analysis.
Version: 2 Date: 5 November 2013
Reviewer: Michael Ussher
Reviewer's report:
This article presents a systematic review and meta-analysis of studies investigating the role of exercise therapy for adults with serious mental illness. This is an important issue as if exercise therapy was shown to have a benefit for this population it would have important public health implications. This therapy could be readily disseminated, is likely to be cost-effective and is targeting a population which has very poor physical health and physical activity levels. The reported methods are highly appropriate and the article is well written.

Major compulsory revision
1. There is an existing Cochrane review with a very similar scope and the authors need to state how their review relates to the Cochrane review (e.g. updates the systematic review and adds a meta-analysis):
Exercise therapy for schizophrenia.
Gorczynski P, Faulkner G.
Also the authors may wish to refer to the 2013 review of studies on exercise therapy and schizophrenia in the text edited by P. Ekkekakis 'Routledge Handbook of Physical Activity and Mental Health.'
2. I would advise the authors to exclude study 43 from the review as it compares the addition of motivational techniques to an exercise programme with exercise alone and does not look at the effects of exercise therapy per se.

Minor essential revisions
1. Abstract - write the full names for SWD and SMD.
2. Throughout manuscript correct 'compared to' (ie likening something to something else) to 'compared with'.
3. Introduction, final paragraph: The statement 'In the general population about 60% of men and 70% do less than the recommended levels [29]' is misleading. I suggest revising it along the lines: 'In the general population about 60% of men and 70% self-report less than the recommended levels and objective measures
of activity suggest that far more of these individuals are failing to meet the recommendations [29].

4. In the section 'Exercise Interventions' (p.8) you need to include all the studies when summarising the types of intervention employed. Also please indicate which studies, if any, including exercise counselling/consultation and summarise the intensity of the exercise interventions (e.g. moderate intensity).

Discretionary revisions
1. Introduction - when referring to poor physical health among those with serious mental illness it might be useful to reference:


2. Introduction paragraph 2: for smoking rates in the general population ref 19 is cited with a figure of 25% given for Scotland. I think it would be more appropriate to give a figure for England (e.g. Health Survey for England) or for the UK.

3. Refs 31 and 32 are a little outdated I would suggested replacing them with the appropriate review chapters in the recent text edited by P. Ekkekakis 'Routledge Handbook of Physical Activity and Mental Health.'

4. In the section 'Setting and participant characteristics' I suggest giving a summary of the ethnicity of the participants.

5. In the 'Outcomes' section I think it would be clearer if you discuss the effects on physical activity levels (ie measure of compliance) and other health outcomes separately.

6. In the 'Discussion' the authors might want to mention that the studies do not report the barriers to exercise, if this is the case.

Level of interest:An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English:Acceptable

Statistical review:Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report

**Reviewer's report 2**

Title:Exercise therapy in adults with serious mental illness: systematic review and meta-analysis.

Version:2Date:8 November 2013

Reviewer:linda chafetz
Reviewer's report:

Minor essential revisions:

1. In the introduction, where the authors review literature on the poor health of the mentally ill, the tone of the writing is often very absolute, presenting findings of a specific cited report as an absolute truth. Some editing to qualify this type of statements would be helpful. A good example is in paragraph 1 of the introduction where figures are presented for loss of life expectancy among the SMI with a citation from a study by Laursen. While this figure and those reported elsewhere do not differ dramatically, there is a range. Qualifying the sentence with a phrase such as, in a study of a Danish sample, rates for adults with schizophrenia were....."

2. Also in the introduction, there is a statement about motivation as a factor in poor health that merits qualification. This is often repeated in the literature but sometimes with weak substantiation. The citation for this is not a primary source and in fact is a review article that cites another secondary source that mentions possible motivation issues. This is more than a question of form: some of the readily accepted “truths” about the SMI are based what may insufficient evidence and have potential to stigmatize this population further.

3. The introduction focuses almost solely on health behaviors (with a nod to genetics) as the source of health problems and seriously underplays the role of medications that are major sources not only of obesity and metabolic dysfunction. This should be corrected.

3. As noted above, the description of the literature search is well done, but the list of search terms is overly detailed and if needed for replicability might be included in a box or table to preserve the flow of the text.

5. On page twelve, in the discussion, there is a lot of material that is redundant with the introduction. It detracts from readability and from the focus on study findings.

6. The conclusions might touch on why the authors have found so few RCTs on exercise alone vs. exercise as part of more comprehensive wellness plans, since this seems to have an important impact on what we know about exercise among this population.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being
published
Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.
Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.
Dear Reviewers,

Many thanks for agreeing to review this paper and for your helpful comments and suggestions. I enclose the changes made to the original paper.

Reviewer's report 1

1. There is an existing Cochrane review with a very similar scope and the authors need to state how their review relates to the Cochrane review (e.g. updates the systematic review and adds a meta-analysis):

   Text revised in amended paper.

2. I would advise the authors to exclude study 43 from the review as it compares

   I have suggested retaining this study. It compares the effect of adding specific exercise advice, practical advice on exercising with motivational interviewing skills, combined with a walking programme compared with a simple walking group. No beneficial effect was found adding this type of exercise advice, practical exercise advice, and motivational skills.

   1. Abstract - write the full names for SWD and SMD.
      Text revised in amended paper.

   2. Throughout manuscript correct 'compared to'
      Text revised in amended paper.

   3. Introduction, final paragraph: The statement 'In the general population about
      Text revised in amended paper.

   4. In the section 'Exercise Interventions' (p.8) you need to include all the studies
      Text revised in amended paper.

      1. Introduction - when referring to poor physical health among those with serious mental illness it might be useful to reference:

         Text revised in amended paper.

      2. Introduction paragraph 2: for smoking rates in the general population ref 19 is

         Text revised in amended paper.

      3. Refs 31 and 32 are a little …

         References updated.
4. In the section 'Setting and participant characteristics' I suggest giving a summary of the ethnicity of the participants.
Data added as requested.

5. In the 'Outcomes' section I think it would be clearer if you discuss the effects on physical activity levels (i.e., measure of compliance) and other health outcomes separately.
Difficult to separate due to the small number of trials therefore I have suggested leaving this unchanged.

6. In the 'Discussion' the authors might want to mention that the studies do not report the barriers to exercise, if this is the case.
Text revised in amended paper.

Reviewer's report 2

1. In the introduction, where the authors review literature on the poor health of the mentally ill, the tone of the writing is often very absolute, presenting findings of a specific cited report as an absolute truth. Some editing to qualify this type of
Text edited to reduce absoluteness although the evidence is fairly consistent in this area.

2. Also in the introduction, there is a statement about motivation as a factor in poor health that merits qualification. This is often repeated in the literature but sometimes with weak substantiation. The citation for this is not a primary source
Text revised in amended paper. References updated and revised.

3. The introduction focuses almost solely on health behaviors (with a nod to genetics) as the source of health problems and seriously underplays the role of medications that are major sources not only of obesity and metabolic...
Text revised in amended paper.

3. As noted above, the description of the literature search is well done, but the list of search terms is overly detailed and if needed for replicability might be included in a box or table to preserve the flow of the text.
I have suggested retaining the search terms in text as it follows a standard format used in most systematic reviews. The description of the search terms is integral to the systematic review and in many cases is included in the written text.
5. On page twelve, in the discussion, there is a lot of material that is redundant with the introduction. It detracts from readability and from the focus on study findings.

Text removed and updated.

6. The conclusions might touch on why the authors have found so few RCTs on exercise alone vs. exercise as part of more comprehensive wellness plans, since

Text revised in amended paper.