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Innovations and Implementation of Exercise Interventions in Mental Healthcare

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Physical activity and exercise are well-known to improve physical health. Now, there is a rapidly-growing interest from researchers, clinicians and the general public in how physical activity and exercise may also be beneficial for mental health. This talk will present the most recent and top-tier evidence around how physical activity may be used to (i) improve overall mental well-being, (ii) decrease the risk of developing mental illnesses, and (iii) enhance the recovery and treatment of those with diagnosed mental health conditions. Thereby, this presentation shall detail the use case for applying physical exercise as a frontline treatment option for tackling both psychiatric symptoms and cognitive impairments in mental disorders, to improve overall recovery. Within this, research from the general population will be used to demonstrate how physical exercise can improve cognitive function, while also increasing brain health and reducing the risk and effects of aging-related neurological diseases. Following this, the findings from interventional research in people with severe mental disorders will be presented, to show the overall efficacy of exercise for symptoms and cognition, exploring the neurological mechanisms, and detailing how pertinent factors such as exercise type, dose and style of administration impact on the effectiveness in different contexts. Therefore, the overall talk will aim to update the listeners on the most recent scientific evidence in the field, while also providing information on the practical strategies, recommendations and guidelines on how to best use physical activity and exercise to support mental health in an evidence-based manner.