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#400WORDS: CHIEF NURSING OFFICER'S RESEARCH FELLOWS EVIDENCE IMPLEMENTATION PROJECTS

## Evaluating the impact of physical group activities on anxiety and depression across psychiatric inpatient settings

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### Background

Depression and anxiety are major public health issues compromising both mental and physical health and are associated with considerable suffering for patients and their families, and increased mortality and morbidity (Verhoeven *et al.*, 2023). Across psychiatric disorders, the presence of significant symptoms of anxiety and depression generally predicts worse outcomes (Fava *et al.*, 2004).

Exercise interventions have been shown to be effective in reducing symptoms of mild and moderate depression (Knapen *et al.*, 2015), and can be a valuable complementary therapy for severe depression (Schuch *et al.*, 2016). In addition, exercise interventions have shown similar effectiveness to established treatments for persons with anxiety disorders (Knapen *et al.*, 2015). Further research is required to determine the effectiveness of group exercise on depression and anxiety in inpatient psychiatric units.

### Review of the evidence

A structured literature search was conducted using the Google Scholar database with the following keywords: 'Anxiety', 'Depression', 'Exercise', and 'Inpatient Psychiatric'. Boolean logic was used to refine the search, and abstracts and titles were screened for relevance. The search yielded 4360 articles from the last 10 years, out of which 24 were identified as relevant.

The major theme that emerged was reinforced in the Martland *et al.*, systematic review (2023); that exercise regimes appear to be safe, viable, and effective as therapeutic interventions in inpatient mental health settings.

Searching for practice-based tools used in these studies to measure impact, Philippot *et al.* (2022) conducted a study that used the Hospital Anxiety Depression Scale to measure symptoms in adolescent inpatients. The study involved 52 randomly assigned participants

who were either part of a physical exercise or control program. The study found that structured physical exercise 'add-on' therapy, led to a reduction in depressive symptoms. This demonstrates the sensitivity of the tool and the effectiveness of structured physical exercise therapy in the care of adolescent inpatients with depression.

## Project plan

This project aims to evaluate the effectiveness of group exercises across inpatient mental health wards in a mental health trust based in the South West of England. *The project is underpinned by the JBI Evidence implementation model (Porritt et al., 2023)*.

Presentations will be delivered to key stakeholders, including service users, service managers, and multidisciplinary team members, to share information and gather feedback.

The Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (Zigmond & Snaith, 1983) will be used to measure anxiety and depression at baseline and following group physical activities. The data collected from the project will be reported with the aim of assisting therapists in understanding the effects of group activities on depression and anxiety among psychiatric inpatients. The report will also help them design the most efficient physical activity plan for these wards and their patients.

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