

New report tackles lack of understanding of Tourette Syndrome in teenagers

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Scientists have found the first reliable evidence that physical activity and sport can help children with Tourette Syndrome to reduce and control their tics and could offer new paths for treatment and therapies.

The research, funded by The Big Lottery and commissioned by Tourettes Action, was led by Georgina Jackson, Professor of Cognitive Neuropsychology from The University of Nottingham's Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences.

Using a combination of interviews, surveys and observations of [young people](#) with TS, Professor Jackson and her team explored what sufferers and their families think hinders their education and in turn influences their tics and social interactions. The young people were all aged between 10 and 20.

Understanding Tourette Syndrome

Prior to this work, very little research had been carried out from the perspective of the parents and young people with TS, on their needs and the factors supporting or affecting educational and psychosocial adjustment when growing up with TS.

The findings of the project could be used to help to improve the experiences of children and teenagers with TS.

Professor Jackson said: "Young people with TS report that anxiety provoking situations increase tics whereas tic reduction is associated with engaging in physical activities and enjoyed extra-curricular pursuits. Our observational findings support the notion that engagement in physical activity leads to tic attenuation and alleviation of tic related distress. The sustained effect of physical activity on TS symptomatology also suggests a potential therapeutic use in tic management for clinicians and schools."

Social acceptance

Chief Executive of Tourettes Action Suzanne Dobson said: "We were delighted to be able to commission this research to the University. Tourettes Action want people with TS to receive the practical support and social acceptance they need to help them live their lives to the full. Our drumming workshops and other associated activities that we organise are testament that engagement in [physical activity](#) can lessen tics.

"We are also proud to have been able to produce the TS Passport. A four sided document where young people with TS can add information about their tics and social situations that heightens/lessens their tics and a space

for any medication accompanied with their photograph. This is a perfect document for additional information to accompany their ID card."

TS is a neuropsychiatric condition involving involuntary muscular movements and vocal sounds ([tics](#)). Tics can sometimes be delayed or suppressed for a short period of time, but this can take a huge amount of effort and can be extremely tiring for children. TS affects up to one per cent of school children and tic severity peaks at around 10 to 12 years, the time when [children](#) start secondary school.

Although TS does not affect intellectual ability it may affect educational attainment, and young people with TS are more likely to be emotionally and socially less well-adjusted than their peers.

More information: An overview of the project report can be found here: www.tourettes-action.org.uk/st..._project_summary.pdf

Provided by University of Nottingham

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