

Exercise used to combat mental health issues

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UQ exercise physiology students are providing exercise and lifestyle programs to people with mental illness.

Following the mantra that a healthy body equals a healthy mind, exercise physiology students from the University of Queensland are providing exercise and lifestyle programs to people with mental illness.

UQ School of Human Movement and Nutrition Sciences clinical supervisor Dr Steve Bartlett said the new placement scheme with Brisbane's Metro North Mental Health aimed to counter alarming health statistics for those with severe mental illness.

The program involves UQ students providing exercise and lifestyle modification services for inpatients and home exercise programs developed for them to follow after discharge.

"There are much higher rates of chronic disease, including cardiovascular disease and diabetes complications, among people with [mental health issues](#)." Dr Bartlett said.

"Increasing evidence shows that risk factors can be significantly reduced through improved access to physical health care and health promotion targeting different lifestyle factors.

"We also know exercise improves physical and mental health, and can have a powerful effect on a person's quality of life and general wellbeing. I have witnessed this first-hand."

The UQ placement program with Metro North Mental Health was piloted in October and November 2014 as a four-week trial.

It is continuing in 2015 at Prince Charles Hospital, and could extend to other Metro North facilities and grow to include students from other universities.

"Students are gaining invaluable experience, using core clinical skills," Dr Bartlett said.

"At the same time they are making a positive difference to the community and helping to build a greater understanding of the

possibilities from [exercise](#) as an intervention in [mental health](#)."

Metro North Mental Health Executive Director Associate Professor Brett Emmerson said his organisation was always looking at improving interventions, service and training.

"Metro North Mental Health recognises the importance of developing first-class clinicians and leaders who specialise in working with people living with a [mental illness](#)," Dr Emmerson said.

"I firmly believe, as a team, we were able to develop a strong foundation to support the extension of this evidence-based clinical placement opportunity."

Provided by University of Queensland

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