

Study suggests physical activity reduces anxiety and depression in patients with COPD

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A study presented today at this year's European Respiratory Society (ERS) International Congress in London shows that increased physical activity among patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) reduces their risk of anxiety or depression. The study is by Drs Milo Puhan, Anja Frei, and Tsung Yu, University of Zurich, Switzerland, and Dr Gerben ter Riet, University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

Comorbidities (other health conditions) are highly prevalent in [patients](#) with COPD. Low [physical activity](#) (PA), a critical feature of COPD, is believed to be an important risk factor for comorbidities. In this new study, the authors assessed the association of PA with incidence of 7 categories of comorbidities in COPD.

The study included 409 patients from primary care practice in the Netherlands and Switzerland. The researchers assessed PA using the Longitudinal Ageing Study Amsterdam Physical Activity Questionnaire at baseline and followed patients for up to 5 years. During follow-up, patients reported their comorbidities (cardiovascular, neurological, hormonal, musculoskeletal, cancer, and infectious diseases) and completed the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale questionnaire for mental health assessment.

The results suggested that higher levels of PA at baseline were associated

with an 11% reduced risk of developing [anxiety](#) over the next 5 years, and a 15% reduced risk of becoming depressed. The researchers did not observe statistically significant associations of PA with the other categories of comorbidities.

The authors conclude: "In COPD patients, those with high PA are less likely to develop depression or anxiety over time. PA promotion programs may be considered to lower the burden of mental disorders in COPD patients."

They add: "These findings have particular significance since mental disorders are common in patients with COPD. The prevalence of depression and anxiety is approximately 40% in COPD patients while the corresponding figure is less than 10% in the general population."

Provided by European Lung Foundation

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