

Strong relationship between self-efficacy and exercise among women veterans discovered

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For female Veterans with fibromyalgia (FM) symptoms, the impact of believing in their ability to begin and sustain a long-term exercise program appears to positively influence their results.

The findings, which appear in the *American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine*, suggest a role for self-efficacy (believing in one's ability to succeed) in [exercise](#) adoption and maintenance among female Veterans, even among those with a high degree of FM symptoms.

FM is a chronic disease characterized by widespread pain. Additional symptoms include waking unrefreshed, disturbed cognition and fatigue. Among veterans, recent research suggests women are more likely than men to report FM. While the benefits of exercise in persons with FM have been well established, exercise interventions have poor adherence and retention rates. Further, as exercise adherence declines, FM symptoms worsen.

The researchers used an internet survey to evaluate female Veterans who were both trauma exposed and suffered from FM. They measured FM impact, adoption of [exercise behavior](#) and self-efficacy for exercise. They found that although women who exercised regularly reported higher FM symptoms, there were strong effects sizes for higher self-efficacy for exercise as well.

According to the researchers one explanation may be that women with more symptoms may have stronger motivation to exercise regularly.

"Therefore, [exercise programs](#) must be tailored to the individual and progressively advanced as the patient becomes better conditioned to mitigate the potential exacerbation of FM symptoms," explained corresponding author Erica R. Scioli, PhD, clinical research psychologist at the VA Boston Healthcare System and assistant professor of psychiatry at Boston University School of Medicine.

The researchers hope that this examination warrants further investigation of both exercise related self- efficacy and motivational factors, in order to better tailor interventions for individuals suffering from both trauma-exposure and FM. "In this effort, we may be able to provide an effective, non -pharmacological approach to FM patients that can better manage their illness and improve their overall quality of life and functioning," said Scioli.

More information: Self-Efficacy for Adoption and Maintenance of Exercise Among Fibromyalgia Patients: A Pilot Study, doi.org/10.1177/1559827617745264 , journals.sagepub.com/eprint/1u..._CuUu8ZNETi4j4jU/full

Provided by Boston University School of Medicine

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