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What is the role of lifestyle behaviour change associated with non-communicable disease risk in managing musculoskeletal health conditions with special reference to chronic pain?

Review article

Dean E, et al. BMC Musculoskelet Disord. 2015.

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Abstract

BACKGROUND: Other than activity and exercise, lifestyle practices such as not smoking and healthy nutrition, well established for preventing and managing lifestyle-related non-communicable diseases (i.e., heart disease, cancer, hypertension, stroke, obstructive lung disease, diabetes, and obesity), are less emphasized in the physical therapy guidelines for addressing chronic pain, e.g., back pain. This state-of-the-art review examines the relationships between lifestyle behaviours and musculoskeletal health, with special reference to chronic pain, and their clinical and research implications.

DISCUSSION: A state-of-the-art review was conducted to synthesize evidence related to lifestyle factors (not smoking, healthy diet, healthy weight, optimal sleep and manageable stress, as well as physical activity) and musculoskeletal health, with special reference to chronic pain. The findings support that health behaviour change competencies (examination/assessment and intervention/treatment) may warrant being included in first-line management of chronic pain, either independently or in conjunction with conventional physical therapy interventions. To address knowledge gaps in the literature however three lines of clinical trial research are indicated: 1) to establish the degree to which traditional physical therapy interventions prescribed for chronic pain augment the benefits of lifestyle behaviour change; 2) to establish the degree to which adopting healthier lifestyle practices, avoids or reduces the need for conventional physical therapy; and

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reduce the need for conventional physical therapy, and

3) to establish whether patients/clients with healthier lifestyles and who have chronic pain, respond more favourably to conventional physical therapy interventions than those who have less healthy lifestyles.

SUMMARY: Lifestyle behaviour change is well accepted in addressing lifestyle-related non-communicable diseases. Compelling evidence exists however supporting the need for elucidation of the role of negative lifestyle behaviours on the incidence of chronic pain, and the role of positive lifestyle behaviours on its incidence and effective management. Addressing lifestyle behaviour change in patients/clients with chronic pain, e.g., back pain, as a first-line intervention might not only constitute a novel approach, but also reduce the socioeconomic burden related to chronic pain as well as non-communicable diseases.

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