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Prescribing Exercise for Chronic Health Conditions: A Quality Improvement Project in General Practice.

Public Health England report that “one in 3 adults in England live with a long-term health condition and they are twice as likely to be amongst the least physically active”¹. The Moving Medicine (MM) website² is an online interface designed by the Faculty of Sport and Exercise Medicine UK to be used within primary care consultations to help with the motivational interviewing and health promotion of patients with chronic health conditions. The aim of my quality improvement project (QIP) was to introduce health care professionals (HCPs) at a GP Practice in Thame to the MM Prescribing Movement online resources over a 6-week period. HCPs who had used the MM website within their consultations were asked to code this in the patient notes and an online survey was distributed via email to the HCPs at the beginning and end of the QIP.

This QIP demonstrates that the MM online resource is user friendly and can easily be used by HCPs within the community setting. Most of the participants would continue to utilise this online resource and recommend it to their colleagues. The most popular length of modules may be a reflection of the current time pressures of community HCPs, with the 1-minute modules being more popular than the 5-minute or more minute alternatives, despite the 5-minute options being found to be more useful. Depression was the most frequently used condition-specific module in contrast to the use of other modules, such as the inflammatory arthritis, cancer and dementia modules. This may reflect a reduced awareness of the benefits of exercise on these specific long-term health conditions and therefore warrants further work on the promotion of exercise and its safety within groups of patients living with or at risk of these conditions.

1. Public Health England. Health matters: physical activity - prevention and management of long-term conditions - GOV.UK. (2020). Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-physical-activity/healthmatters-physical-activity-prevention-and-management-of-long-term-conditions>. (Accessed: 2nd April 2020)
2. Sport England & PHE. Moving Medicine. (2018). Available at: <https://movingmedicine.ac.uk/>. (Accessed: 20th March 2020)

Conclusion

Publication of the NHS England guidance was associated with a modest reduction in the prescribing rates of simple analgesia, without evidence of creating an additional health inequality. Careful implementation by CCGs is required to optimise financial benefit.

Keywords

Analgesia, general practice, interrupted time series analysis, prescriptions