

## Title: Exploring the impact of prescriptive physical activity for patients with mild to moderate depression

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Over 268 million people worldwide suffer from depression. Previous research has shown physical activity increases brain derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF). This hormone is responsible for decreasing the neuronal cell death of serotonin, thus increasing circulating serotonin and potentiating decreasing depressive symptoms in patients diagnosed with major depressive disorder. However, prescriptive physical activity (PA) in the form of cardiovascular exercise is not often used as a treatment modality. Moreover, current treatment guidelines are not all-inclusive and fail to support holistic options for reducing depressive symptoms as a first or second-line treatment for depression.

**Purpose:** This study aims to evaluate the impact of prescriptive physical activity, in the form of cardiovascular exercise, on general health, quality of life, and depression scores for patients diagnosed with mild to moderate depression.

**Ebp Questions:** (1) Is there a relationship between participant characteristics, general health, quality of life, and depression scores? (2) Is there a difference in general health, quality of life, and depression scores following participation in a nurse-led cardiovascular exercise program?

**Methods:** This study will use a pre-intervention post-intervention design to explore the impact of prescriptive physical activity on patient outcomes. A convenience sample of patients, diagnosed with mild to moderate depression, will be invited to participate in a four-week cardiovascular exercise program. The PHQ-9 Depression Scale will be used to measure depression.

**Outcomes:** General health, quality of life, and depression scores will improve following program participation.

**Significance:** The findings from this study can be used to provide evidence that supports the use of prescribing PA for MDD as an adjunctive treatment modality and to provide recommendations for improving patient outcomes by implementing PA into the treatment plans of depressed patients as a first-line treatment.