

(PP) PROMOTING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR PEOPLE WITH CHRONIC DISEASES: CARE FOR PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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Context

There is growing evidence that physical inactivity increases the risk of chronic disease and that active people with chronic disease suffer less than inactive patients. In addition, physical activity benefits the recovery process.

Due to aging, lack of physical activity (which applies to 55% of the population according to the Dutch Standard for Healthy Physical Activity) and increasing obesity, the number of people with chronic disease will increase considerably. The most common diseases in the Netherlands are arthrosis, diabetes mellitus, asthma/chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), cancer, psychiatric disease, heart failure, stroke, rheumatoid arthritis (RA), neck and back complaints and osteoporosis.

Doctors, medical professionals and paramedics can play a significant role in promoting an active lifestyle among people with chronic diseases. The Netherlands Institute for Sport and Physical Activity (NISB) has encouraged 'physical activity on prescription' for years. In 2006 NISB started the 'care for physical activity' project in 16 health care centres (primary care organisations consisting of general practitioners, physiotherapists and sometimes pharmacists, nutritionists and social workers).

Project/Partners

Experience with physical activity on prescription has been gained in the Netherlands in developing a chain of rehabilitation centres, hospitals, GPs, physical therapists and home care institutions offering a responsible programme of sport and physical activity both during and after treatment. Practical instruments (methods and methodologies) and physical activity guidelines and protocols were developed to encourage an appropriately active lifestyle and incorporate elements of sport and physical activity in treatments and follow-up treatments.

Those experiences are used in the 'care for physical activity' project in 16 primary care health care centres. Several good practice models have been developed and local/regional partnerships involving various communities established. The social and physical environment is also addressed to facilitate physical activity.

In addition NISB pays extra attention to the transfer of information and knowledge about sport and physical activity and their usefulness, necessity and results for the target group, staff and other organisations.

The NISB developed the project together with NebasNsg federation, which promotes sport for the disabled, Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, patient organisations and funds, Royal Dutch Association of Physical Therapy and other organisations representing medical professionals.

Next to that: in 2006 the awareness campaign FLASH! – the Dutch campaign to promote physical activity - targets also primary care organisations. 16 regional events for people with chronic diseases are organized and medical professionals and the target group are stimulated and informed via mass media. Also master classes and expert meetings are held to exchange knowledge and experiences. The campaign runs till 2010.

In 2005, a diabetes awareness campaign was launched together with the Dutch Diabetes Federation (NDF), Dutch Food and Nutrition Centre and Netherlands Institute for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (NIGZ). This will run to the end of 2006.

Results

The 16 projects 'care for physical activity projects' seem to be successful. Medical professionals and the target group are enthusiastic about the approach. Monitoring and evaluation are an important aspect of the project. Clear results are needed for further implementation.

Two out of 16 projects have been running for a longer time. Results show that medical consumption decreases with about 20%. Two national care insurers have decided to compensate the costs of participating for their clients in those health care centres.

Discussion/Implications

The challenge for NISB and its national partners is the nationwide implementation of the best principles. Implementation is supported by the National Government. In its recently published policy paper: 'national action programme sports and exercise' the importance of stimulating exercise via primary care is emphasized. A yearly budget of €2 million is reserved. Local governments, care insurers and the target group will have to finance local implementation.

The forthcoming years health care centres will receive assistance in incorporating lifestyle advice in their treatments, local organisations are encouraged to establish partnerships involving existing and new sport and physical programmes, and the target group will be consulted regarding available programmes. Target group and community participation are crucial for the project's success. This will be achieved by means of examples of good practice, methodologies, master classes, and information and expert meetings.

References

- Physically active people with chronic disease: a quickscan, Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research (TNO), 2003 (in Dutch)
Research for the action programme sports and exercise for people with chronic diseases, Prismant and NISB, 2006 (in Dutch)

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