

Physical Activity and Prevalence of Depression and Antidepressants in the Spanish Population

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Abstract

Introduction: Depression is a mental disorder that affects more than 250 million people in the world, limiting their functional capacities. The work of public health policies is aimed at reducing its prevalence as well as its pharmaceutical cost. Physical activity (PA) programs are interventions with a high potential for effectiveness. **Objectives:** To establish the relationships between physical activity and the prevalence of depression and antidepressant intake in the Spanish population. **Design:** We performed a correlational study that was based on data from the European Health Survey Spain 2020 with 20,287 participants, aged 18–84 years, living in Spain. **Results:** Dependency relationships were found between the prevalence of depression, and: the frequency of PA, the number of days of PA per week, and the number of days of muscle strengthening in the population, in both sexes, and in all age groups ($p < 0.001$). Dependency relationships were found between the three PA variables and the prevalence of taking antidepressants ($p < 0.001$). An elevated prevalence of depression and antidepressant taking were found in the inactive groups compared to those who performed PA ($p < 0.05$). **Conclusions:** There is an inverse relationship between physical activity and the probability of suffering from depression and the intake of antidepressants. Performing PA 3–4 days/week, including 1–2 days of strength work, could be the best proposal to reduce the prevalence of depression in the Spanish population. © 2022 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland.

Author keywords

Antidepressants; Depression; Health; Physical activity; Strength