Exercise Can Mitigate Depression and Anxiety in People With HIV

That is according to a meta-analysis including nearly 500 people.

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People with HIV can find relief from depression and anxiety through exercise, aidsmap reports.

Publishing their findings in the Journal of Psychosomatic Research, a team led by Andreas Heissel, PhD, of the University of Potsdam in Germany conducted a meta-analysis of 10 randomized controlled studies published between 1990 and 2018 that included a total of 479 people with HIV. The studies all randomized participants into two groups: One was prescribed an exercise program; the other one wasn't. Symptons of depression or anxiety were assessed after the intervention period.

The participants were about evenly split between men and women. The studies were conducted in sub-Saharan Africa, India, the United States, Iran and Germany.

Eight of the studies assigned participants to aerobic and resistance training and the other two assessed the effects of yoga. The exercise programs lasted four to 12 weeks and included two to six sessions of 45 to 75 minutes weekly.

Ninety percent of the participants finished their study's follow-up period.

Of the nine studies reporting on depression, five were supported by high-quality methodology. They indicated that the association between exercise and a reduction in depression was highly statistically significant, meaning it was very unlikely to have been driven by chance.

In the depression studies, the investigators found that the factors that most greatly mitigated depression included aerobic exercise, training at least three times per week and engaging in supervised exercise.

Two of the five studies with data on anxiety were considered to have provided high-quality data. Just as with depression, exercise had a highly statistically significant association with anxiety reduction.

"[These] findings suggest that exercise may serve as a therapy that helps people living with HIV to

reduce depression and anxiety," the study authors concluded.

To read the aidsmap article, click here.

To read the study abstract, click here.

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