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Study shows link between physical activity and depression in patients at risk for heart disease

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In the study published in the prestigious *American Journal of Medicine* using data from the Nord-Trøndelag Health Study in Norway, the researchers studied whether pattern of leisure time physical activity among 189 patients prior to being hospitalized with first heart attack was associated with level of depressive symptoms after the initial heart attack.

The researchers found that those performing regular physical activity over 10 years prior to their first heart attack had almost 20% less odds of being depressed compared to their counterparts being stable inactive in the same period. The data also showed that those who changed from being inactive to become physical active prior to their first heart attack had a better protection against depression compared to those changed from being physical active to inactive. Dr. Linda Ernstsén, from the Sør-Trøndelag University College and K.G. Jebsen Center for Exercise in Medicine at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), and first author on the paper, says that "Our results add strength to the evidence of a causal link between physical activity and mental health".

"In fact we do not know if the heart attack itself is related to the prevalence of depression or if it is the change in physical activity level that is the driving force behind our findings. More research is definitely needed in this area" says Ernstsén.

This study has significant potential clinical impact as it reinforces the link between physical activity and depression and particularly emphasizes the need for patients at risk for heart disease and/or depression as well as those with these disorders to increase their levels of physical activity and regular exercise.

Source:

Norwegian University of Science and Technology
