

Moving Toward Wellness: Exercise Augmentation of Affective Disorder Treatment in Inpatient Psychiatry

Steven LeBreux BSN, RN; Jeremy Mills, DNP, PMHNP-BC; Michael Derchak, DNP, PMHNP-BC

BACKGROUND

- U.S. lifetime depression prevalence is 18.5%¹
- Depression is associated with increased risk of suicide², and mortality due to increased cardiovascular risk³
- Adults suffering from depression make up 25% of all psychiatric hospitalizations^{4,5}
- Antidepressants are modestly effective and leave a significant percentage of patients without relief^{6,7,8,9}
- When added to standard depression treatment, exercise consistently demonstrates moderate-to-large effect sizes in reducing depressive symptoms**^{10,11,12,13,14,15}

LOCAL PROBLEM

- Project site is a 24-bed unit in an inpatient behavioral health hospital in North Carolina
- Project site primarily treats depression pharmacologically and lacks structured opportunities to exercise for patients
- Project staff and stakeholders voiced a need for exercise programming at the project site
- Project aim: achieve 25% participation in exercise groups for depressed patients during the implementation period

METHODS

- Project development followed the Johns-Hopkins Evidence-Based Practice Model
- Literature review synthesized 6 high-quality studies, leading to a strong practice change recommendation
- Communication with stakeholders at the project site and examples in the literature guided the development of the exercise group
- Educational materials on exercise were developed to encourage patient participation
- Data collected included group sessions, patient participation, inclusion criteria, and qualitative measures on satisfaction, mood changes, attitudes towards exercise, and post-discharge intentions

Exercise augmentation of depression treatment in an inpatient behavioral health hospital demonstrated 43.8% participation of depressed patients over 90 days.

MOVEMENT GROUP

GROUP DESCRIPTION

Therapeutic group focused on providing movement instruction in a psychiatric setting; group will include strengthening, aerobic, and/or stretching exercises. The physical activity in movement group is intended to benefit depression, cardiovascular health, joint mobility, balance, strength, and agility.

RECENT RESEARCH SHOWS:

- Adding exercise to mental health treatment such as psychiatric medications has been shown to provide **more effective treatment for depression** than only taking medication.
- Exercise's potential usefulness in treating other mental health conditions such as anxiety, eating disorders, bipolar disorders, schizophrenia, addictions, dementia, and personality disorders.

BENEFITS OF EXERCISE

- Reduce Anxiety
- Reduce Depression
- Improve Self Esteem
- Improve Cognitive Functioning
- Decrease Social Withdrawal
- Improve Sleep
- Decrease Chronic Pain
- Joint Health & Flexibility
- Increase Well-Being
- Manage Blood Sugar
- Improve Strength & Balance
- And more!

Movement for Mental Wellness

In addition to being good for our physical health, exercise has been found to have many important benefits for mental health as well:

- Relief from Depression**
Recent research recommends exercise as an **effective treatment for depression**, especially when combined with other treatments like antidepressants.
- Increases Mood & Well-being**
Exercise such as strength and aerobic training can cause significant increases in positive mood, even after only 15 minutes of movement.
- Increases Energy Levels**
Exercise sends oxygen and nutrients to your brain & body, which benefits the health of your cardiovascular system, helps manage blood pressure, a healthy weight, and regulate blood glucose levels.
- Decreases Anxiety**
Exercise works to regulate neurotransmitters in our brain; recent research suggests exercise can be an effective treatment for reducing anxiety.
- Improves Self Esteem**
Spending time doing healthy activities tends to boost self-esteem & confidence.
- Improves Memory & Decreases Cognitive Decline**
Exercise increases cells in the hippocampus, an important part of the brain for memory & learning. It can help prevent neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's.
- Improves Sleep**
Regular exercise can fix sleep-related problems and lead to higher quality sleep, which is important for mental and physical wellness.
- Increases Strength, Balance, and Coordination**
Regular exercise can improve muscular strength, balance, and coordination which help us carry out everyday tasks.

MAKING IT HAPPEN

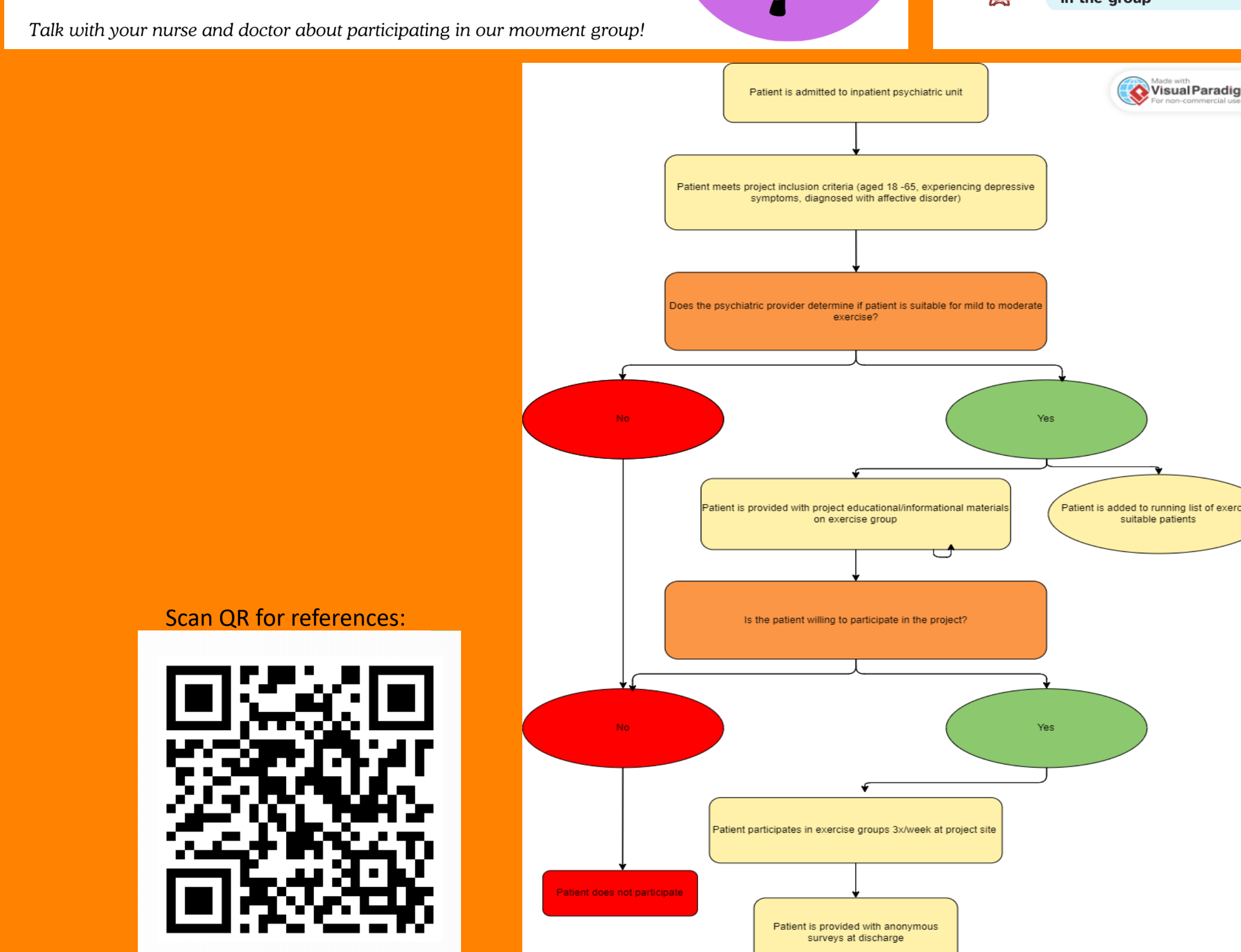
Studies show that just 15 minutes of exercise per day has many positive impacts, including decreasing depression, improving cognitive functioning, & increasing lifespan by 3 years.

Small, attainable goals are more sustainable. If you start small the positive impacts can get bigger and bigger over time! Try to set a goal of just doing one simple thing every day.

Just getting up and to the gym/outside is the hardest part! Try to set your goal on just getting there. Once you are up moving, it is easier to keep going.

We are providing movement groups for patients here at Sweeten Creek Mental Health and Wellness Center. Groups can happen either in the gym or outside!

Talk with your doctor to ensure you are medically fit for exercise before engaging in the group.

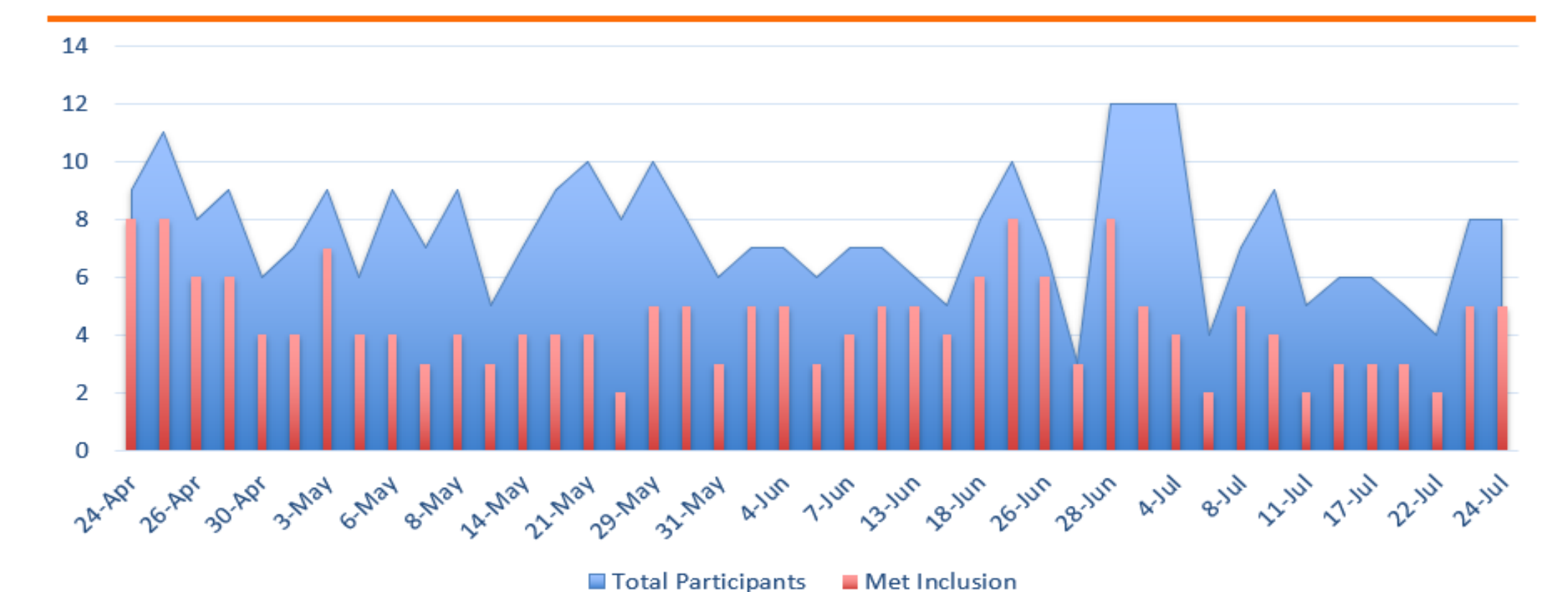


INTERVENTIONS

- Exercise group (strength/aerobic) held three times a week for 30-45 minutes, both indoors and outdoors
- Educational and informational materials provided
- Cost of project estimated at ~\$100 per week

RESULTS

Group Participation Total Participants (All diagnoses) = 324
Met Inclusion (Depressed participants) = 193



- 324 total participants (193 depressed and 131 other diagnoses)
- 43 exercise groups over 90 days (average of 3/week)
- 43.8% participation rate for all depressed patients admitted during the project period
- Themes of patient motivations: "lose weight, get stronger, be healthier, go outside, boredom"
- 82% of survey completers noted a positive change in subjective mood after the exercise group and 72% expressed a desire to exercise after discharge
- No adverse events recorded

CONCLUSIONS

- Overall, exercise augmentation for depressed patients proved to be a low-cost, sustainable, and a feasible practice change
- Project aims were exceeded, with depressed patients' participation rate of 43.8%
- Positive impacts were seen in both patients and staff who participated in the project
- Protocol has spread at the project site
- Project findings to be disseminated at project site meetings