

Expert Opinions about Barriers to Physical Activity among Ghanaian Adults with Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus: A Qualitative Descriptive Study

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Abstract : Background: Physical activity (PA) is a major component of diabetes self-care management; although this is often stressed to patients, many adults with Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus (T2DM) lead sedentary lifestyles, and barriers exist for uptake of PA. Aim: To explore opinions of healthcare professionals about barriers to PA for adults with T2DM in Ghana. Methods: This qualitative descriptive study included 13 healthcare professionals (3 Physiotherapists, 3 exercise physiologists, 3 nurses, and 4 physicians) who provide care to individuals with T2DM in Ghana. Data was collected by semi-structured interviews. The social cognitive theory guided the design of the interview schedule. Data was analysed using thematic analysis. Results: Four main themes were identified: 1) Individual-related factors, 2) Interpersonal factors, 3) Environment-related factors, and 4) Health system-related factors. Fear of injury, existing co-morbidities, and lack of time make it difficult for people with T2DM to engage in PA. Lack of family support, fear of social ridicule, and cultural beliefs prevent uptake of PA. Poorly designed community spaces, including safe walkways and lack of exercise facilities, inhibit PA participation. Few physical therapists and physical therapy centres exist to support PA participation among people with T2DM. Some nurses and doctors lack adequate knowledge to deliver proper PA education to clients, thereby making clients lack the needed support. Conclusion: Adults with T2DM may be restricted from partaking in PA arising from personal and external factors. This study has identified that barriers to exercise need consideration when designing PA programs that aim to improve health outcomes for people with T2DM in Ghana.

Keywords : type 2 diabetes, physical activity, exercise, ghana, qualitative, barriers

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