

Healthcare Professionals' Utilization of Physical Exercise as a Strategy to Prevent Non-Communicable Diseases in Ethiopian Public Sector Hospitals

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Abstract : Background: Despite the recognized benefits of physical exercise, including a reduction of health risk factor indicators, illness and deaths related to Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, hypertension, and cancer, the extent of its recognition and use as a prevention strategy by healthcare professionals working in Ethiopian referral hospitals is unknown. Objective: This study explored healthcare professionals' use of physical exercise as a non-communicable disease prevention strategy in the Ethiopian public sector healthcare system. Methods: In this cross-sectional study, a self-administered questionnaire was conducted after being piloted to ensure validity and reliability. For the study, 312 participants were selected from 13 purposively selected Ethiopian referral hospitals, these being 99 physicians who were purposively selected and 213 nurses who were proportionately and randomly selected. Results: The results indicated that three-quarters (78%) of healthcare professionals working in Ethiopian hospitals are not using physical exercise as a strategy to prevent NCDs. Increased specialization (AOR = 20.203, $p < 0.001$), longer service years (AOR = 0.041, $p = 0.014$), young age (AOR = 19.871, $p < 0.001$), and being male (AOR = 0.269, $p < 0.001$), were predictors of using physical exercise as a strategy for the prevention of NCDs. Conclusion: Healthcare professionals' utilization of physical exercise as a strategy for NCDs prevention was inadequate in Ethiopia. Given the increasing burden of NCD disease in Ethiopia, training nurses, physicians and medical managers have to acknowledge the use of physical exercise as an NCD prevention strategy. The results of this study highlight the importance of formulating physical exercise intervention strategies for NCDs patients, and the need to incorporate training for healthcare professionals on the type, intensity, duration, and frequency of physical exercise to prevent NCDs in the Ethiopian healthcare system.

Keywords : exercise, medical managers, nurses, physicians

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