BRIEF COMMUNICATION

The 5 Fs of Fitness: A Social Pharmacology Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Encouragement for exercise should accompany every pharmacological prescription for lifestyle disorders. This communication crafts a person-friendly fitness framework, using 5 Fs to highlight the various facets of an effective exercise prescription. Focus is needed to ensure persistence with flexibility (stretching), free flow (aerobic), and fortitude-oriented (resistance) exercises. Fellowship implies that physical activity should be fun-filled.

Keywords: Chronic disease, exercise, physical activity, social pharmacology

Physical activity and exercise form the bedrock of fitness and well-being[1]. While this fact is well-known to academicians, it becomes challenging to educate and explain the concept of exercise to the public. Even more difficult is motivating people to initiate and adhere to fitness regimens. Guidance from most international and national experts is aspirational rather than operational. People living with chronic disease may feel that the goals suggested by their health care professionals are not achievable. This often creates a sense of despair and despondency. Thus, even well-meaning recommendations may have a paradoxical, negative impact on health outcomes.

SLOW AND STEADY

Just as a medical nutrition prescription needs to be simplified, an exercise prescription must be easy to understand. It should appeal to the individual's feelings and encourage long-term adherence to therapy. Experts describe a hierarchy of exercise prescription in exercise-naïve patients. They advise beginning with flexibility and balancing exercises, then starting aerobics. Increase frequency, intensity, and duration slowly and steadily, keeping individual strengths and limitations in mind[2]. This can then be followed by resistance/muscle-building exercise. The framework of physical activity diversity takes this a step forward[3]. Exercise should touch each muscle group, in every way possible, to optimize results. This concept is like that of dietary diversity or balanced diet, which calls for food items from diverse groups and sources.

Encouragement for exercise should accompany every pharmacological prescription for lifestyle disorders. We must individualize physical activity prescriptions according to age, comorbidities, functional capacity, and patient preferences. Even small increments in activity can add meaningful health benefits and improve confidence in exercise-naïve individuals.

BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL FRAMEWORK

We use the 5F framework (Table 1) to explain the importance of diverse types of exercise to our patients and their families. This format touches upon the social angle of the biopsychosocial triad of health by including fellowship or teamwork as a contributor to health. It also introduces the themes of mindfulness, meditation, and mind styling as a part of health and fitness. This encourages the use of mind-body intervention, both as a tool and target for health. Thus, it builds upon, and strengthens, World Health Organization guidance on physical activity[4].

THE 5 FS

The 5F rubric uses an alliterative list of words to describe the features of an exercise prescription. The

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Table 1. The 5Fs of Fitness

F	Exercise domain	Examples	Expected benefits
Focus	Mind-body engagement and commitment	Mindfulness, meditation, goal setting, self-monitoring	Improved motivation, adherence, stress reduction
Flexibility	Stretching and balance training	Yoga, stretching, balance exercises	Better mobility, posture, fall prevention
Free Flow	Aerobic activity	Walking, cycling, swimming, jogging, dancing	Cardiovascular fitness, metabolic health, endurance
Fortitude	Resistance and strength training	Weight training, resistance bands, body-weight exercises	Muscle strength, bone health, functional independence
Fellowship	Socially engaging activity	Group exercise, sports, family walks, community fitness programs	Social support, enjoyment, sustained participation

list begins with the word focus. This word suggests concentration and determination to be healthy, and to make exercise an integral part of one's life. It also means mindfulness and meditation, which can help in modulating our mindstyle towards metabolic health. We use the word mindstyle, rather than mindset, as it represents a more dynamic and fluid mode of existence. This allows easier change of attitudes, thus facilitating healthier behaviors and choices.

The next levels represent the hierarchy of physical activity. Flexibility includes stretching and balancing exercise, while free flow is the term we use for aerobics. Fortitude, used as a synonym for muscle strengthening and resistance exercise, can also be taken to mean mental resilience. Fellowship highlights the social component of health. It is important to advise exercises which are fun, and which can be practiced in the company of friends and loved ones. The acronym SPADES (Structured Physical Activity, Dance, Exercise, and Sports) represents the spectrum of activities which can be used to promote physical fitness.

VALUE ADDITION

The 5F framework adds value to the methods used for promotion of person-centered lifestyle management. This is a part of the continued discussion and dialogue on exercise, which is essential to ensure optimal metabolic health. It can be incorporated in artificial intelligence-based algorithms, as well as primary care, to buttress the fight against physical inactivity[5,6], and to enhance the efficacy of conventional pharmacological prescriptions.

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