

## News Release

14 May 2018

### **Reduce Depression and Cognitive Decline by up to 30% with Regular Exercise**

- Strong evidence exists showing a 20-30% reduction in depression in adults who participate in physical activity daily
- There is clear evidence that physical activity reduces the risk of cognitive decline in adults and older adults, with a 20–30% risk reduction in the developing dementia for adults participating in daily physical activity
- Physical activity can increase self-esteem and reduce depression and anxiety in children
- Physical activity can be used in treatment for depression, used as a standalone treatment or as a combination therapy with medication and/or psychological therapy
- Physical activity is available to all, has few costs attached, and is an empowering approach that can support self-management

Mental health problems are common and account for the largest single source of disability in the UK<sup>1</sup>. Recognising the many benefits physical activity can bring to mental health and wellbeing, the Faculty of Sport and Exercise Medicine (FSEM) UK has published an evidence based position statement for health professionals, sports participants, schools, parents and carers on The Role of Physical Activity and Sport in Mental Health.

The statement, containing a guide to physical activity as an intervention, has been produced in partnership with the Royal College of Psychiatrists and with the support of Mind. The three organisations recognise the role physical activity has in preventing mental health problems and in improving the quality of life for those experiencing them. The guide outlines strong evidence for physical activity as a treatment for a range of mental health conditions.

**Dr Paul D Jackson, President of the FSEM UK, comments:** *“The research to support regular physical activity in the maintenance of good mental health and the role of exercise in the management of many mental health conditions is now well established.*

*“We have collaborated with the Royal College of Psychiatry and Mind to look at the best evidence available and have produced this statement as a guide for all health professionals and the wider community to support them in promoting physical activity in both the prevention and management of mental health conditions”*



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**Dr Alan Currie, Lead on the Sports and Exercise Psychiatry Special Interest Group of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, said:** *“We are pleased to launch this position statement with the Faculty of Sport and Exercise Medicine (UK). It highlights the important issue of ensuring that the mental health needs of sportsmen and women are addressed alongside their physical health needs.*

*“At the same time, it is an important part of raising awareness of physical activity and keeping active for mental wellbeing. A moderate level of exercise is enough for the benefits to be seen, for example, building up to a 30 minute brisk walk every day which can be broken into 10 or 15 minute sessions. There is also enormous benefits in taking part in a group sport or activity and getting out into green space. We hope this guide will encourage all health professionals to talk to people about physical activity in managing their mental wellbeing.”*

**Hayley Jarvis, Head of Sport and Physical Activity for Mind, said:** *“We’re delighted to have worked with the Faculty of Sport and Exercise Medicine UK on their position statement and welcome its reinforcement of the links between physical activity and mental wellbeing. Our own research suggests that people with mental health problems who are more regularly active have better mental wellbeing, as well as improved resilience and ability to cope. We look forward to working more closely with organisations in the sport and physical health sector to reach our shared aim of helping more people with mental health problems become and remain physically active.”*

The guide explains that Physical activity has been shown to have a strong and positive influence on mental wellbeing and some mental illnesses, participation in regular physical activity can increase self-esteem and reduce stress and anxiety. The guide addresses the reduction of depression and anxiety in children, its effect on attention deficit disorder and the case for physical activity in reducing the risk of cognitive decline in older adults.

The statement also provides useful information on mental health problems in professional sport and promotes the recommendations made by The Duty of Care Review, including mental health training for coaches and support staff.

Access the statement on the Faculty of Sport and Exercise Medicine UK website [https://www.fsem.ac.uk/position\\_statement/the-role-of-physical-activity-and-sport-in-mental-health/](https://www.fsem.ac.uk/position_statement/the-role-of-physical-activity-and-sport-in-mental-health/)

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**Notes to Editors:**

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Patron: HRH The Princess Royal



### **Excellence in Musculoskeletal Medicine, Exercise Medicine and Team Care**

- The Faculty of Sport and Exercise Medicine UK was launched in 2006 and is an intercollegiate faculty of the Royal College of Physicians of London and the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh
- The Faculty has around 600 Members and Fellows, not including medical students. There are 126 Sport and Exercise Medicine Doctors on the GMC specialist register (March 2018)
- The FSEM (UK) not only sets standards in SEM but oversees research, training, curriculum and assessment of SEM Doctors, including providing revalidation services
- Sport and Exercise Medicine consultants work in a variety of musculoskeletal and exercise medicine services across NHS primary and secondary care. They also work within sports from the 'grass routes' level up to supporting international teams and athletes
- The specialty has a large scale application in improving the musculoskeletal, physical and mental health of the general public through exercise advice and prescription. Further information about the specialty can be found in the [Media & Resources](#) section at [www.fsem.co.uk](http://www.fsem.co.uk)

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<sup>i</sup> The Five Year Forward View for Mental Health – A report from the independent Mental Health Taskforce to the NHS England February 2016 <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Mental-Health-Taskforce-FYFV-final.pdf>



**#MentalHealthAwarenessWeek**  
**#PhysicalActivity**  
**#Sport**