JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY AUSTRALIA

Active participation in sport for individuals with multiple sclerosis

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Multiple Sclerosis (MS)

- Neurodegenerative disease
- Onset – 20-40 years[1]
- Engaged in sport, active leisure, family pursuits and employment
- Rehabilitation: strength, function and basic mobility
- Participation in an active lifestyle demands high-level mobility

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Aim and objectives

Aim:

To explore the experience of participation in sport and exercise for individuals with MS with minimal disability.

Objectives:

To gain an understanding of key factors that influence participation in sport and exercise

To determine the support required to participate in sport and exercise for as long as possible

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Methods

- Qualitative, descriptive study
- Three focus groups in northern Queensland, Australia
- Individuals with MS with minimal disability
  - Expanded Disability Status Score (EDSS) 0-4
- Purposive selection to gain maximum variation
  - Exercise participation
- Inductive thematic analysis

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Participants

Number of participants	16
Gender	Female=14; Male=2
Age at onset (mean)	43 years [SD 8.9]
EDSS level (mean)	1.3 [SD 1.3]
Duration of MS (mean)	7 years [SD 7]
Exercising regularly	63%
Employment status	37.5% full-time; 37.5% part-time; 25% not working
Dependent children	50%

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Key themes

- Personally engaging with exercise
- Influencing barriers and enablers of exercise
- Sustaining independence
- Integrating into lifestyle
- Getting the balance right

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Personally engaging with exercise → Mode and mobility level

- Trail running
- Squash
- Boxing
- Outdoor cycling

- Gym
- Yoga
- Walking

Mental and physical benefits

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Influencing barriers and enablers of exercise

- Fear
- Judgement
- Heat
- Fatigue

I just feel like the mental factors after diagnosis affect absolutely everything but they seriously affect your ability to exercise.

FG1 female participant

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Sustaining independence

Using sport and exercise to:

- Remain well
- Sustain mobility
- Retain roles and lifestyle

My motivation is - do you want to be pushed around in a wheelchair?
So I get up and I get dressed and I go for a run because, I do believe I have that attitude of I must exercise… I must stay mobile as long as I can.
And I will live by that for as long as I can.

FG3 female participant

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Integrating into lifestyle

- Meaningful activity
- Roles and responsibilities
- Social exercise
- Healthy lifestyle

I'd have to work out what I need to achieve for the day

FG1 female participant

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Getting the balance right

- Listening to body
- Personal strategies for management
- Personal support around sport and exercise

Personalised plans because I think everyone of us has a problem with something different.

FG1 female participant

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What do we know?	What do we want?

• Exercise modes
  • Treadmill walking[4]
  • Progressive resistance exercise[3]
	• Challenging sports and exercise
	• Integrated active lifestyle
	• Personal informed choice

• Minimal physical activity guidelines[5] • Mild to moderate disability	• Optimum guidelines • Risk assessment
• Limitations in exercise consultation[6]	• Access to health professionals with knowledge of MS and exercise • Personalised plans

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Getting the balance right!

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References

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