

## Tailored physical activity in substance use treatment for young people: Strengthening research collaborations with young people

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**Introduction:** In Australia, 16% of young people use substances in a way that confers a moderate or high risk of experiencing health or other problems.[1] There is growing evidence that targeted physical activity (PA) may provide a non-stigmatizing treatment adjunct.[2,3] Successfully translating this evidence into practice requires that the perspectives and experiences of young people are integrated through collaborative and participatory research designs.

**Method:** Young people aged 15-25 at moderate or high risk of experiencing substance-related health and other problems participated in a study that examined the barriers and facilitators to integrating PA into Australian substance use services. The study used mixed methods (quantitative survey, n=145; qualitative focus group, n=4).

**Results:** Service-related barriers included vague PA recommendations and inappropriate treatment models not tailored to young people's individual treatment needs. Young people made recommendations for service provision (e.g., providing engagement and decision aids such as reward systems, positive testimonies, and PA interventions tied to local sports teams), improved service access (e.g., school/workplace-service collaborations), tailored PA, informative education, scheduling support, expert availability (on-site availability of motivated clinician) and services processes (e.g., frequent information sharing and PA progress checking within the treatment team, screening procedures and increased resources allocated to PA interventions).

**Discussions and Conclusions:** Young people's participation and insights are important to integrating PA into Australian substance use youth treatment services. Research should focus on participatory approaches, establishing and strengthening partnerships to integrate the available evidence-base with young people's experiences to advance intervention design and development in this area.

**Implications for Practice:** Research and practice should advance non-stigmatizing early intervention options for young people by actively pursuing the integration of different knowledge streams and barrier-reduction to facilitate young people's participation in intervention development and implementation processes.

**Disclosure of Interest Statement:** None to declare.

### Reference List:

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