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Sport and Physical Activity as Part of a Our Healthy Lifestyle

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Abstract:

This section provides a overview of the related areas between sport and health. An introduction to the role of sport in enhancing physical and mental well-being is provided. During recent decades, there has been a progressive decline in the level of physical activity in people's daily lives in developed countries. For a majority of people, little physical effort is involved any more in their work, domestic chores, transportation and leisure. Whilst specific health risks differ between countries and regions, the fact remains that physical inactivity is a major risk factor for most common nun-communicable diseases and physical activity can counteract many of the ill effects of inactivity.

Keywords: Sports, Health, Well-being, Physical Activity, Health Benefit, Phychosocial Health Healthy Lifestyle, Health Campaigns.

Introduction

The world health organization (WHO) estimates that, with the exception of sub-Saharan Africa, chronic diseases are now the leading causes of death in the world. The WHO cites four non-income countries, namely: cardiovascular disease, cancer, chronic respiratory disease and diabetes.

A number of key themes related to sports and health are then explored in more detail.

1. The health benefits of sport and physical activity
2. The Health Benefits of sports and physical activity
3. Physical activity and Health
4. Physical activity and Psychosocial health
5. Sport and Physical Activity as part of a healthy Li8festyle.
6. Sport and public Health Campaigns.

Definations of Health

One of the most widely used definitions of health is that of the WHO, which defines health as : “ a state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”. This definition goes beyond a condition of physical health but includes mental health and general well being.

Physical Activity and Health

Sport and physical activity has been used as a tool to improve mental and social well being. Physical inactivity is a major risk factor associated with a large number of lifestyle diseases such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes and obesity. Sport projects t5hat specifically focus on health outcomes generally emphasize.

- a) The promotion of healthy lifestyle choices among children and young people as well as adults to combat inactivity.

- b) The use of sport as a tool to raise awareness on communicable diseases in developing countries, for example, through district or national health campaigns supported by athletes and sports competitions.
- c) The use of sport as a didactical tool to communication vital health related information to “at risk” groups.
- d) The use of sport to mobilize hard to reach groups as part of large scale health campaigns, including for example, communities with low population density.
- e) Sport is considered to contribute to achieving mental health objectives, including addressing depression and stress related disorders.

The Health Benefits of Sport and Physical Activity

Although research interest on physical activity and health dates back to the 1950s, the breakthrough in the scientific evidence on health benefits of physical activity largely took place during the 1980s and 1990s. There is an overwhelming amount of scientific evidence on the positive effects of sport and physical activity as part of a healthy lifestyle. The positive, direct effects of engaging in regular physical activity are particularly apparent in the prevention of several chronic diseases, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, hypertension, obesity, depression and osteoporosis.

The report from the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace states that young people can benefit from physical activity as it contributes to developing healthy bones, efficient heart and lung function as well as improved motor skills and cognitive function. Physical activity can help to prevent hip fractures among women and reduce the effects of osteoporosis. Remaining physically active can enhance functional capacity among older people and can help to maintain quality of life and independence.

Physical activity and psychosocial health

The WHO has estimated that “one in four patients visiting a health service has at least one mental, neurological or behavioral disorder, but most of these disorders are neither diagnosed nor treated”. A number of studies have shown that exercise may play a therapeutic role in addressing a number of psychological disorders. Studies also show that exercise has a positive influence on depression. Physical self-worth and physical self-perception, including body image has been linked to improved self-esteem. The evidence relating to health benefits of physical activity predominantly focuses on intra-personal factors such as physiological, cognitive and affective benefits, however, that does not exclude the social and inter-personal benefits of sport and physical activity which can also produce positive health effects in individuals and communities.

Sport and physical Activity as part of a Healthy Lifestyle

A number of factors influence the way in which sport and physical activity impacts on health in different populations. Sport and physical activity in itself may not directly lead to benefits but in combination with other factors can promote healthy lifestyles. There is evidence to suggest that changes in the environment can have a significant impact on opportunities for participation and in addition, the conditions under which the activity is taking place can heavily impact on health outcomes. Elements that may be determinants on health include nutrition, intensity and type of physical activity, appropriate footwear and clothing, climate, injury, stress, sport and physical activity can make a substantial contribution to the well-being of people in developing countries. Exercise, physical activity and sport have long been used in the treatment and rehabilitation of communicable and non-communicable diseases. Physical activity for individuals is a strong means for the prevention of diseases and nations is a cost-effective method to improve public health across populations.

Sport and public Health Campaigns

In 2002 the World Health Organization deemed “Physical Activity” the theme of World Health Day. Since that time April 6th is celebrated as the world day for physical activity. This is an excellent example of a global initiative aimed at promoting health through physical activity across populations.

To reduce the burden of disease world-wide, the world health organization introduced a global strategy in 2004. The Global strategy on Diet, physical activity and health is a large-scale initiative aimed at promoting health enhancing physical activity and supporting policy development and research. Collaborative efforts between organizations focusing on sport or health are necessary in used sport to raise awareness on immunization and organized sports events for vaccination campaigns in Zambia against measles. Renowned sports stars in various sports promoted the health campaign through which approximately 5 million children were vaccinated I 2003. Similarly during the 2003 cricket world cup, the cricket teams from India and Pakistan together promoted the national polio eradication campaign in television commercials, competitions and events in the weeks leading u the tournament.

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