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Healthy Lifestyle Interventions for People with a Mental Illness

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Background: Secondary illnesses such as physical health problems and negative social experiences are highly prevalent amongst people with a mental illness, compared to the general population. Anti-psychotic medications are known to induce weight gain and those with a mental illness are not often educated on keeping their bodies healthy. While it is recognised that there is a link between physical disorders and mental health conditions, few initiatives have been made to address this relationship in the hospital or community setting. **Purpose:** To examine existing healthy lifestyle interventions, through current literature, and determine whether or not implementation is beneficial. **Method:** 27 resources were reviewed to determine the impact of lifestyle interventions on those with a mental illness. **Findings:** Lifestyle interventions including exercise, nutrition, drug and alcohol, smoking, employment, peer support, social, and educational interventions, can be beneficial when considering the individual needs of a client as well as whether it can be maintained long-term. The literature reviewed suggests that education and active learning are strategies that will increase skill transference into real-life situations and will assist participants in understanding how to maintain these skills for the long term. **Conclusion:** Implementing healthy lifestyle interventions has been seen to decrease the risk of those with a mental illness suffering from further secondary illnesses and also improve the quality of life for those already suffering from secondary illnesses. It would be beneficial for those with a mental illness to have healthy lifestyle interventions begin in the hospital setting so that individuals can subsequently be referred out to community settings to engage in a healthy lifestyle program. **Learning Outcomes:** To educate occupational therapists on the link between mental health and physical disorders and to illustrate how maintaining a healthy lifestyle can be beneficial to those with a mental illness.