

Sports practice as an effective measure for the prevention and treatment of chronic illnesses in prison

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ABSTRACT

Globally, there are 11 million people estimated to be in prison. Research has shown that morbidity is linked to chronic diseases. Sports can be an effective intervention for the prevention and treatment of chronic diseases. We recommend that sports practice programs be implemented in prisons. Future studies should focus on cost-effectiveness as a measure of promotion, prevention and treatment. **Keywords:** Sports; Chronic disease; Prison.

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At worldwide level the population held in prison establishments are made up by more than 11 million persons (Walmsley,2015), the imprisonment characterizes on a decrease in the state of health and quality of life. In Peru, according to the first prison census in 2016 a total of 76 thousand 180 persons are in seclusion state, in which they suffer from several chronic illness like depression (9,6%), anxiety (8,7%), chronic lung diseases (8,4) and high blood pressure (7%) (INEI, 2016). Another element to take in mind for prison health are the detention standards, the style of life of the inmate and the availability of sports and labour activities offered by the penitentiary institutions.

On that matter, the evidence about the effectiveness of physical activity in the prevention and treatment of chronic illnesses is related to improvements in body weight, body mass index, levels of energy and stress reduction (Elwood et al ,2016). The benefits of supervised sports programs in soccer and rugby for young prisoners by qualified professionals within penal establishments have been found to result in improvements in general health, life habits, emotional management and self-perception (Meek et al, 2013). Another investigation that examined sports practice and insomnia concluded that prisoners without insomnia perform significantly better during sports practice (Elger, 2009).

In summary, it is recommended that prison institutions implement official health programs through sports activities that highlight the benefits of health promotion within prisons to add to the quality of life of the inmates and their reintegration into society. The penitentiary sports program should be led by qualified professionals and include integrated educational sessions, standardized guidelines, material and proper facilities. Furthermore, the prison institutions should consider legislative modifications that allows them to regulate the detention conditions of the inmates due to overcrowding rates. The prison overcrowding causes space reductions, hygiene and overburdened services. Therefore, the implementation of sports programs has the potential to reduce the prevalence of chronic illnesses in the prison population.

Finally, we believe that future studies should consider the cost and effectiveness of diverse sport programs for health promotion, prevention and treatment of chronic illnesses to improve decision making and the commitment of prison institutions to improved states of health for their prisoners.

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