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Physical Activity and Mental Health

Regular physical activity is associated with significantly improved physical and mental health.^{1 2 3}

Evidence suggests that individuals with mental health problems are physically inactive compared to the general population.⁴

There is a need to consider the physical activity levels of mental health patients and to integrate locally available physical exercise initiatives into their care packages.

Figure 1. Percentage of NWPCMHT patients vs. percentage of population who do not meet minimum physical activity guidelines



Results

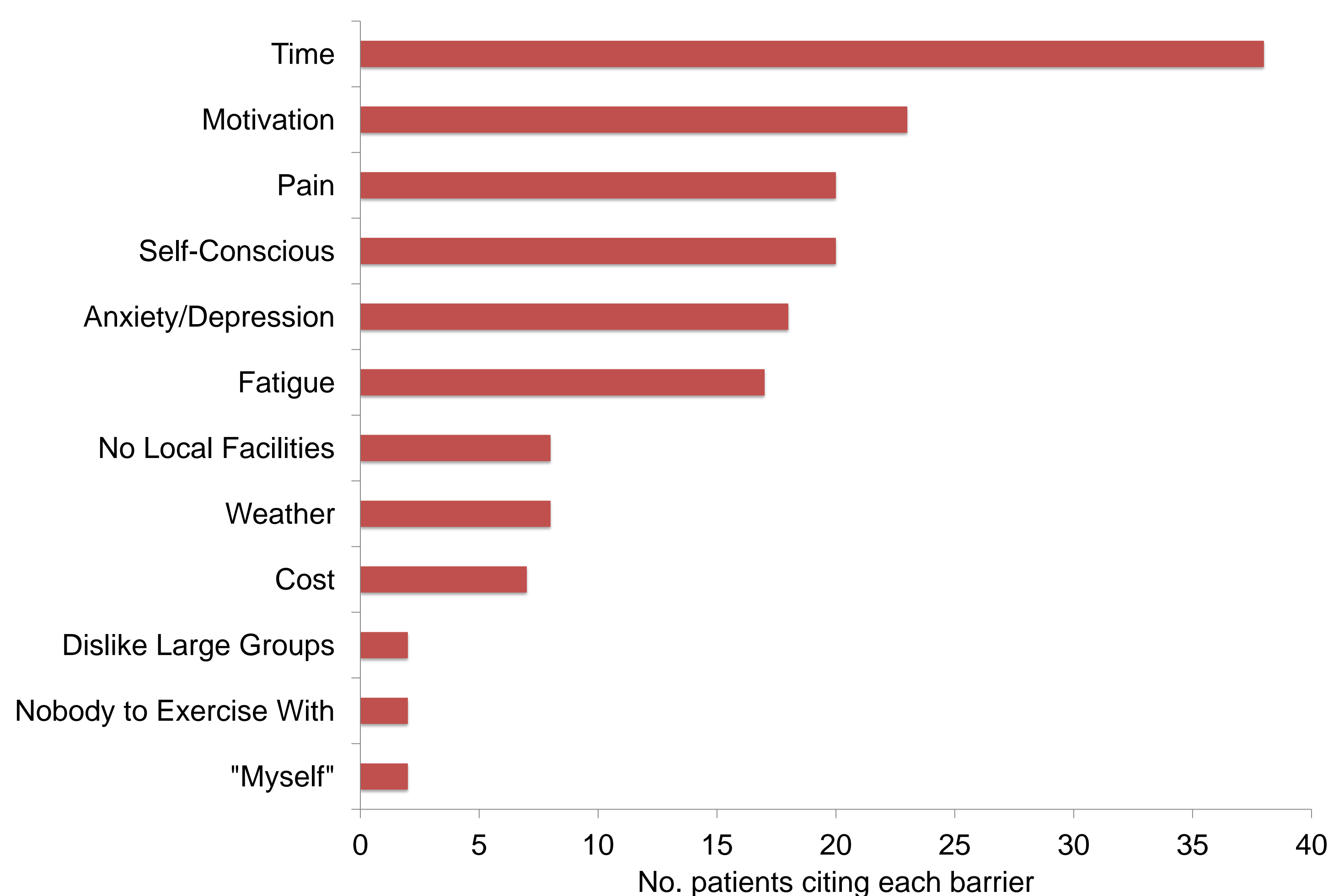
83% of patients did not achieve nationally recommended minimum guidelines for exercise. Their activity levels were well below population averages (Figure 1).

Numerous physical activity programmes are available for NHS GG&C patients, via the Glasgow Life Live Active scheme.

Although 74% of NWPCMHT patients reported an interest in a physical activity programme, only 8% had been referred (Figure 2).

Patients highlighted a number of barriers to physical activity (Figure 3). **Many of these barriers could be targeted as a part of the psychological therapies provided by PCMHTs.**

Figure 3. Barriers to physical activity



Aim and Research Questions

The Glasgow North-West Primary Care Mental Health Team (NWPCMHT) treats adults with mild-moderate mental health problems. In line with the 2020 Vision, the NWPCMHT aims to consider its patients' mental *and* physical health.

The aim of this study was establish:

- (1) If there was a **need** for physical activity initiatives for NWPCMHT patients
- (2) If currently available physical activity initiatives were being **accessed** by NWPCMHT patients.

Method

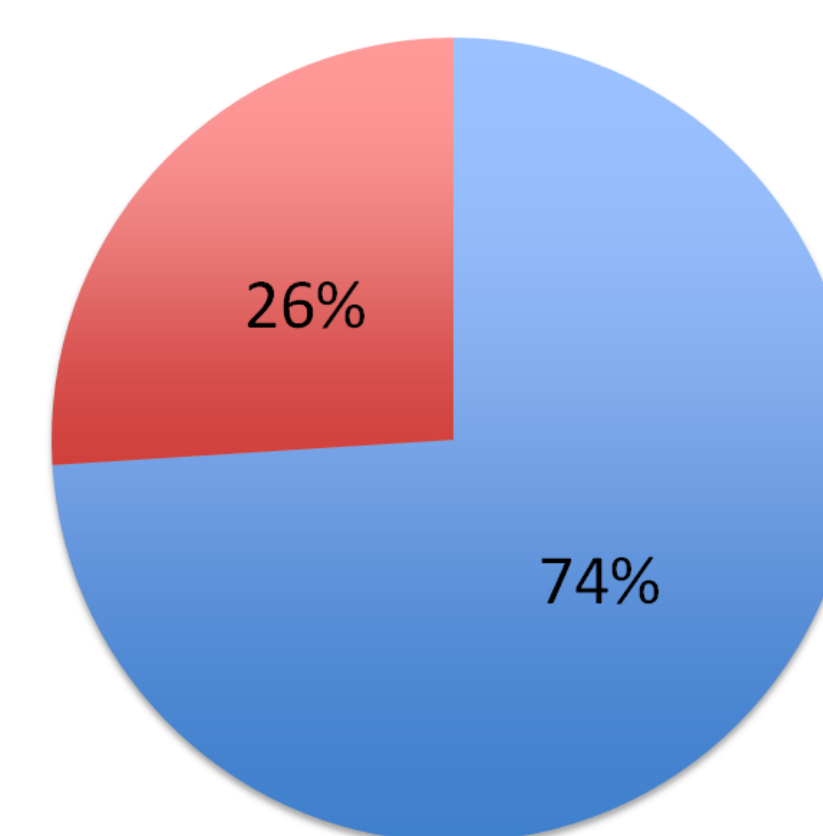
We worked with the NHS Health Improvement Directorate to ascertain the physical activity initiatives available for NHSGGC patients.

All patients attending the NWPCMHT during a 2 week period in August 2016 were asked to complete a survey regarding their physical activity levels and whether or not they had been referred to a physical activity initiative.

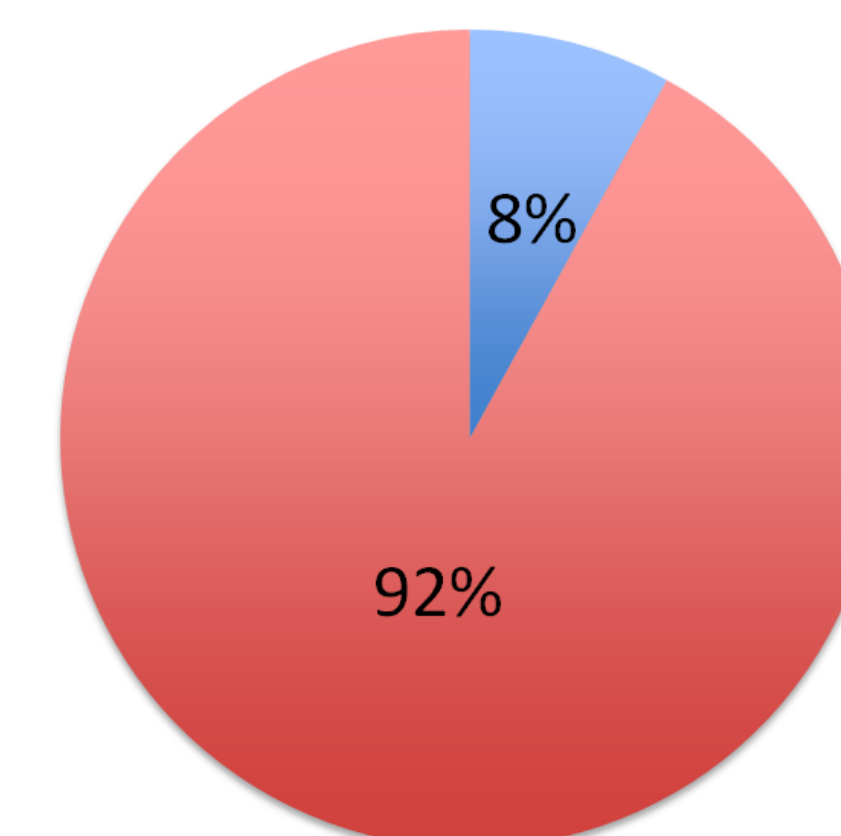
Of the 154 patients that attended the NWPCMHT during that time, 123 completed the survey (80% response rate).

Figure 2. Percentage of patients (1) interested in and (2) referred to physical activity initiatives

1. Patients interested



2. Patients referred



Conclusions

There is a need and demand for physical activity interventions amongst NWPCMHT service-users. However, existing physical activity initiatives are not being offered to NWPCMHT service-users.

The findings of this study have been presented to the NHS GG&C Primary Care and Mental Health Interface group. This has contributed to a change in referral practice: all registered professionals can now refer to Glasgow Life Live Active programmes (rather than GPs only).

This study has also increased NWPCMHT practitioners' awareness of available physical activity initiatives and the need to refer patients to these.

A learning event with Glasgow Life Live Active practitioners will be arranged, to help promote awareness of physical inactivity and barriers to exercise amongst individuals with mental health difficulties.

References

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- ² De Mello, MT, de Aquino Lemos, V, Antunes, HK, Bittencourt, L, Santos-Silva, R, & Tufik, S. Relationship between physical activity and depression and anxiety symptoms: a population study. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 149(1), 2013, 241-246.
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- ⁴ Ussher, M, Stanbury, L, Cheeseman, V, & Faulkner, G. Physical activity preferences and perceived barriers to activity among persons with severe mental illness in the United Kingdom. *Psychiatric services*. 2007. 405-408.