



SYNOPSIS

IMPROVING PTSD OUTCOMES THROUGH EXERCISE

Dr Simon Rosenbaum

Key words: mental health, exercise, PTSD,

Purpose of your paper: Structured exercise interventions are now a key component of the approach used in supporting patients to recover from PTSD. This paper will discuss recent studies and current programs in this field.

Synopsis: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder affects 5 to 10 per cent of the population, with rates significantly higher for returned soldiers and police officers. Traditionally, treatment has involved medication, psychotherapy and group therapy. A ground-breaking study has shown that structured exercise including resistance training and walking helps people recover from PTSD as well as other mental health conditions.

Carried out with the help of 81, predominantly male patients from a service or police background at St John Of God Health Care's Richmond Hospital's PTSD treatment program, this study formalises what many have found to be true after leaving the service – exercise helps in the management of the negative psychological effects of war..

This presentation will discuss the use of structured exercise interventions as a key component of the approach now used in supporting patients to recover from PTSD.

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EXERCISE AND MENTAL HEALTH: AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO IMPROVING HEALTH AND WELLNESS OUTCOMES FOR INJURED NSW POLICE OFFICERS

Steven McCullagh

Key words: PTSD, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, psychological injury, mental health, exercise, health and wellness, Police, First Responders

Purpose of your paper: To demonstrate an innovative application of the emerging evidence around the positive affects on long term health and wellness outcomes of exercise for mental health, including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, anxiety and depression.

Synopsis: As First Responders, members of the NSW Police Force (NSWPF) are frequently confronted with traumatic and distressing situations. While NSWPF has a comprehensive framework to minimize the risk of its employees suffering psychological injury, the risk of developing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is significantly heightened for Police Officers. If not treated effectively, the long term health and wellness outcomes for those suffering from mental health disorders are significantly worse than for the general population.

Given this heightened risk, the NSWPF are constantly seeking out new, evidence based opportunities to assist those members of their workforce suffering from mental health conditions.

Recently published literature now points to the positive long term health and wellness benefits for sufferers of PTSD that adopt a program of regular, structured exercise and observe a healthy diet. This important learning provides those tasked with treating sufferers of PTSD with another set of relatively low cost tools that compliment other evidence based treatment options.



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NSWPF had already established Recon, an innovative strength and conditioning program based upon the “return to play” principles of elite professional sports. The infrastructure created for the Recon program, consisting of three specialised gym fitouts across Sydney and Newcastle, gave NSWPF the perfect platform from which to launch Reconnect: a 12 week diet, exercise and psychological support program designed specifically for NSWPF members with a psychological injury.

This presentation will outline the establishment of the Reconnect program and cover in detail:

- The unique challenges in relation to mental health for the NSWPF
- Operational framework for the Reconnect program
- The world class facilities and treatment providers that underpin the programs
- Practical implications for applying the research findings around exercise, general health and wellbeing
- Results and learnings based upon those officers that have been through the Reconnect program
- Reconnect applications to preventative / proactive care.