

Associations of the 'weekend warrior' physical activity pattern with mild dementia



Implication for clinical practice: prospective cohort study over a 16-year follow up period

Encourage and advise patients to engage in just 1-2 exercise sessions per week as it can provide cognitive health benefits and lower dementia risk.

Adapt interventions like weekend-warrior for time-limited individuals for a realistic and effective option.

Reinforce that any movement is better than none and consider incorporating physical activity counselling as a part of dementia prevention with cognitive and physical benefit strategies in primary care settings.

Context

To investigate whether engaging in physical activity once or twice a week ('weekend warrior' pattern) reduces the risk of mild dementia compared to inactivity. To compare the cognitive benefits of 'weekend warrior' activity versus regular physical activity (three or more sessions per week). To estimate the proportion of mild dementia cases that could be prevented if all adults engaged in physical activity.

Methods

- 10,033 adults from the Mexico City Prospective study were divided into three physical activity groups – No sport/exercise, weekend warriors (1-2 sessions per week), Regularly active (>3 sessions per week) and were followed for an average of 16 years.
- Mini mental state examination (MMSE) was used for Cognitive assessment at follow-up.
- Cox proportional hazards models adjusted for confounders (age, education, income, BMI , smoking etc).

Results

- Compared to inactive individuals the risk of mild dementia was 25% lower in weekend warriors and 11% lower in regularly active group.
- Attributable fraction analysis suggested that 13% of dementia cases could be prevented if all adults engaged in at least 1-2 exercise sessions per week.

Reference

O'Donovan G et al. "Associations of the 'weekend warrior' physical activity pattern with mild dementia: findings from the Mexico City Prospective Study." (2025) British Journal of Sports Medicine. 59:325-332.