

## Changes in Self-Determination During an Exercise Referral Scheme

### Abstract

*Objectives:* Exercise Referral Schemes (ERS) are now a common feature of UK Primary Health Care. Success in adhering to exercise programmes largely depends on people's reasons for exercise, and that extrinsic motives such as compliance with external pressures (e.g., from a General Practitioner) will produce lower levels of adherence compared to those exercising for intrinsic reasons such as enjoyment. The purpose of this study was to examine changes in self-determined motivation during the early stages of an ERS, as well as adherence to the programme.

*Methods:* New patients (n=30; aged 25-86), completed the Behavioural Regulations in Exercise Questionnaire at the start of the ERS and after 6 weeks. Adherence was also monitored over the 6 week period.

*Results:* Over the 6 week study self-determined motivation towards exercise increased ( $p<.01$ ). Participants were categorized as those who adhered to the ERS over the six week period, those who partially adhered and those who dropped out. Results revealed significant differences between adherers, partial adherers and the dropped out group in self-determined motivation.

*Conclusions:* The results of this study suggest that self-determined motivation can be fostered and patient adherence supported through an appropriately structured ERS.

Implications for theory, research and practice are addressed.

*Keywords:* Exercise referral scheme, self-determination, motivation, adherence