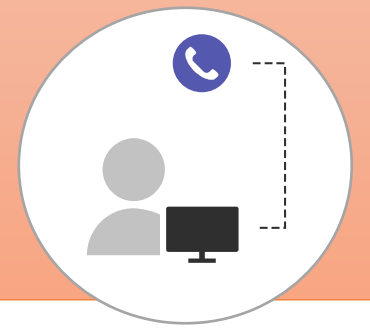


What Did We Do?

We asked individuals living with mild-to-moderate MS or PD in Canada to complete 2 interviews about:

- Their experiences of physical activity and exercise during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Barriers and motivators to exercise, particularly during the pandemic restrictions
- How exercise and physical activity changed after the reduction of restrictions
- How changes in physical activity and exercise impacted their well-being



Participants

11 participants: 25-64 years of age
Diagnosis length: 7 months – 17 years
(early-moderate stages)

4 Men: PD
3 Women: PD
4 Women: MS

3 participants had been diagnosed with COVID-19

All but 1 participant were active prior to COVID-19

What Did Participants Say?

"Umm, but it just kind of, it [exercise], just slipped my mind. I guess I was so wrapped up with COVID that I wasn't even thinking of anything. I was more in survival mode... I wasn't depressed, but it [COVID] was taking all of my energy."

"Some symptoms were probably made worse by not being as active."

"I am hoping to be able to get more active and get into a routine again."

"I liked COVID. Frankly, I like the shutdown."

"I just [found] Zoom made everything so easy so I would be meeting the exercise goals in a different way I guess."

"Maybe COVID-19 accelerated the whole thing because we stopped doing the exercise."

"I need to control my Parkinson's symptoms as much as possible, and the best thing that I found is lots of [types of] exercise... any exercise is good, but [some] exercise is better than others."



Exercise frequency during COVID-19 ranged 0 – 7 days per week:

- 2 participants increased exercise frequency
- 6 participants decreased exercise frequency
- 3 participants-maintained exercise frequency

Key Takeaways & Implications

Some participants were able to maintain their exercise frequency but almost all participants experienced a decline in the intensity of activity

Poorer stamina, slowness of movement, and instability were the most reported physical changes as a result of changes to physical activity during the pandemic

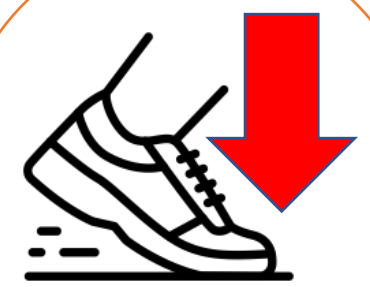
Self-motivation to exercise declined during the pandemic – participants explained how they felt as if they were prisoners in their own homes and compared it to being in a war

Some participants replaced their previous activity with online exercise, but most found it was not the same as exercising in-person, in terms of type of exercise, intensity of exercise, and social aspects

Where the pandemic led to large changes in daily routines (e.g., to job, family schedules), physical activity was significantly disrupted

When participants lost access to physical activities (like group activities, team sports) due to pandemic restrictions, they found it difficult to pick them back up at the same level even once restrictions were removed

Not all exercise experiences were negative during pandemic restrictions. Some families were brought closer together and some participants were able to focus on improving well-being and exercise



Conclusions

- Post-pandemic, exercise and physical activity frequency and intensity should be gradually increased to ensure symptoms do not worsen.
- Goal-oriented and personalized exercise and physical activity programs will assist with self-motivation.
- Health care professionals need to be trained on the impact of COVID-19 on overall well-being (e.g., social, psychological/emotional, physical) to properly prescribe exercise.