

# Enjoyment in physical activities: What people with disabilities need to promote their health

Sir,

From ancient civilizations to modern day, physical activity has been seen as a key to emotional, intellectual, and physical health so that ancient Iranian poetries like Hakim Abol Qasem Ferdowsi frequently has emphasized that performing physical activities and games such as wrestling, fencing, and walking causes physical, intellectual, and emotional health.<sup>[1]</sup> It is well known that physical activity is an important factor to improve fitness and health in all people with and without disabilities. Furthermore, studies indicate that physical activity has a significant role to reduce the risk for metabolic and cardiovascular diseases and symptoms of anxiety and depression in the general population.<sup>[2,3]</sup>

According to the 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, performing at least 60 min of daily physical activity is essential for children and adolescents, but people with disabilities (PWD) show lower physical activity levels than their counterparts without disabilities.<sup>[4]</sup> The physical activity guidelines note that a physical activity should be associated with enjoyment so that it can reflect feelings of pleasure, liking, and fun. Some studies show that performing a physical activity as an obligation or duty without enjoyment can limit or reverse health benefits. In addition, enjoyment is a predictor of health and causes more participation in physical activity.<sup>[5]</sup>

Unfortunately, there are a few studies about physical activity among PWD in Iran. These studies report that PWD who spend less time on physical activities are more likely to experience obesity than those performing daily exercises. Furthermore, these studies show that the physical activity level is quite low among PWD, but on the other hand, these persons, in order to perform sports activities, would encounter barriers to access to physical environments.<sup>[6]</sup> In this article, we propose some important factors that must be considered by health policymakers to improve physical activity participation and increase its positive effects on health.

- Evidence generation: Developing physical activity-related research among PWD in the context of Iran
- Evidence-based guidelines: Formulating evidence-based guidelines to improve health among PWD through enjoyable and appropriate physical activity
- Education: Developing structured physical education program in schools and health-care institutions for PWD
- Accessibility: Reducing physical barriers to access to sports and recreational spaces
- Information: PWD and their family should be well informed about health problems caused by physical inactivity
- Stakeholder involvement: Promoting physical activity and health need intersectorial collaborations. Public sectors, nongovernmental organizations, and other interest groups in all levels of local, regional, state, and national should be involved in identifying, developing, and implementing policies.

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## Conflicts of interest

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