

Physical activity and body image in physiotherapy students

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Background There is a decrease in the physical activity of future physiotherapists, due to readjustments after admission to college. The high levels of sedentarism, cause diverse physical consequences, especially in terms of corporal image perception. This fact is due to a multidimensional construction of several psychosocial factors, which include motivational factors and behavioural changes.

Objective To characterize the level of physical activity and satisfaction with body image among students of the first year of graduation in physiotherapy. Analyse the influence of initiating a graduation degree, in terms of physical activity and perception of corporal image and to also identify the main barriers to regular practice of physical activity. **Methods** An analytical cross-sectional study was carried out on a sample of 60 students (13 males and 47 females) from the first year of the physiotherapy degree at Escola Superior de Saúde do Porto (ESS-P), excluding those who had already attended a graduation degree. A sample characterization questionnaire and the International Questionnaire on Physical Activity (IPAQ) – Short Version were administered through the Qualtrics platform. For the anthropometric measurements and body composition, the Tanita BC-545NTM scale and a Seca stadiometer were used. Satisfaction with body image was assessed through the Body Shape Questionnaire. The questionnaire score and the Body Mass Index (BMI) were calculated. Data and its treatment was performed in the SPSS software, with a level of significance $\alpha = 0.05$.

Results About 20% individuals of the total sample were physically inactive and 56.7% were moderately active, there were differences in the level of activity between male and female; males

were more in a “very active level” than females (61.5 vs 14.9%; $p = 0.008$). To start a graduation degree leads to a decrease in the regular practice of physical activity (78.3 vs 40.0%; $p = 0.001$ before and after, respectively). The main barriers identified for the regular practice of physical exercise were: 71.7% inadequate schedules; 30.0% laziness and 20.0% fatigue. About satisfaction with body image, only females were dissatisfied (30% vs 0%; $p < 0.001$). Starting a graduation degree made the perception of body image worse in 46.7% of the sample, without differences in gender.

Conclusions There is a high percentage of students physically inactive and dissatisfied with body image, being this process more notorious among the female gender. Being admitted to a graduation degree has shown to influence negatively the level of physical