PSYC 1111-01 Introduction to Health Psychology

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**Managing Asthma Through Behavioral Changes: A Psychological Perspective**

Asthma is a chronic respiratory condition that requires continuous management to control symptoms and prevent exacerbations. Psychology plays a significant role in helping patients manage asthma through behavioral changes and coping strategies.

**Reducing and Mitigating Illness Through Psychology**

Psychology can assist asthma patients by providing tools to manage stress and anxiety, which are known triggers for asthma attacks. Techniques such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) help patients change negative thought patterns that contribute to stress. Research has shown that CBT can significantly improve asthma outcomes by reducing anxiety and improving asthma control. Additionally, relaxation techniques like deep breathing exercises, meditation, and mindfulness can help patients remain calm and reduce the likelihood of an asthma attack during stressful situations.

**Behavioral Changes for Optimal Health Outcomes**

Several behavioral changes are associated with the best health outcomes for asthma patients. Adherence to medication regimens is crucial. Patients must consistently use their prescribed inhalers and other medications to keep their symptoms under control. Psychology can help by providing strategies to improve medication adherence, such as setting reminders and developing routines. A study by Apter et al. (2013) found that psychological interventions improved medication adherence and reduced hospitalizations for asthma patients.

Regular physical activity is another important behavioral change. Exercise can strengthen respiratory muscles and improve overall lung function. However, asthma patients may fear that exercise will trigger symptoms. Psychological interventions can help by gradually introducing physical activity in a controlled manner and teaching patients to manage early signs of asthma during exercise. Research indicates that supervised exercise programs combined with psychological support can improve physical fitness and reduce asthma symptoms (Freitas et al., 2018).

Stress management is also vital. Chronic stress can worsen asthma symptoms, so learning effective stress management techniques is crucial. Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) programs have been shown to improve asthma outcomes by helping patients manage stress and improve their overall well-being.

**Challenges in Implementing Behavioral Changes**

Implementing these behavioral changes can be challenging. Medication adherence requires discipline and consistency, which can be difficult for some patients, especially children and adolescents. Regular physical activity can also be challenging due to the fear of triggering symptoms. Stress management techniques may take time to learn and incorporate into daily life, and some patients may initially be resistant to practices like meditation or mindfulness.

Overall, while these changes can be challenging to implement, psychological interventions can significantly enhance patients' ability to manage their asthma effectively. By addressing both the emotional and behavioral aspects of asthma, psychology helps patients achieve better health outcomes and improve their quality of life.

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References

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