

Barriers to Adaptive Sport Participation in Children and Adolescents with Cerebral Palsy

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BACKGROUND

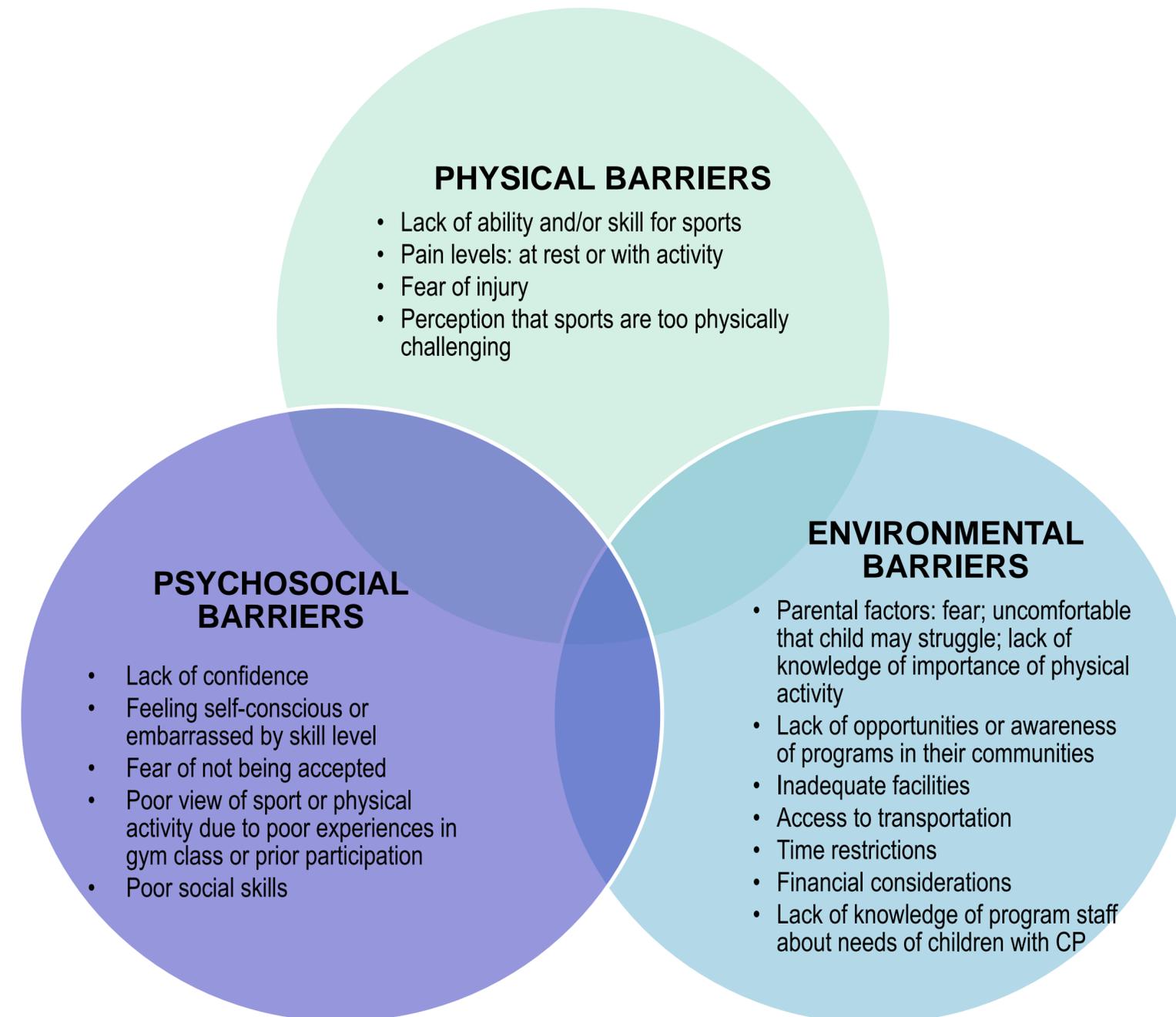
- The benefits of regular physical activity and exercise are well established for children and adolescents with and without disabilities
- Participation in sports, both inclusion and adaptive sports, has physical health benefits as well as enhancing overall well-being from a social-emotional standpoint
- Children with Cerebral Palsy (CP) are less likely to get the recommended amount of physical activity/exercise which leads to decreased cardiovascular fitness, decreased muscular endurance, and increased risk for obesity and progression of chronic diseases
- Studies suggest that adults with CP are more likely to have a healthy level of physical activity and maintain locomotion skills longer if they are involved in regular exercise and physical activity as an adolescent

PURPOSE: The purpose of this report is to identify barriers to participation in adaptive sports in children and adolescents with CP

METHODS: A comprehensive literature review was performed with PubMed

RESULTS

Common themes were identified from the literature regarding barriers to participation. They were organized into three common themes: physical barriers, environmental barriers, and psychosocial barriers



DISCUSSION

- Psychosocial factors seem to have the most substantial impact on willingness for a child/adolescent to participate
- Growth during adolescent period may hinder success in "inclusion" based activities and families may need to consider moving toward adaptive options for GMFCS levels I & II
- Participation in regular physical activity early in life is essential to promote ongoing healthy lifestyle choices and preventing chronic disease progression

CONCLUSIONS

- The benefits of adaptive sports are vast and have lasting implications on physical and emotional health across the lifespan
- It is important to recognize the multitude of barriers that may impede children and adolescents with CP from participating in adaptive sports and recreation
- Physicians, physical therapists and athletic trainers are in a unique position to help promote participation in adaptive sports and recreation, help families understand the benefits, and find programs that best suit a child's abilities and interests