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THE BENEFITS OF OUTDOOR THERAPY

and selected resources
around Hinesburg, VT

MICAELA BAROFFIO

PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

Outdoor exercise has been shown to improve both physical and mental well-being.¹

Even viewing nature using “display stimuli” in an indoor setting led to “more relaxed body responses.”²

However, research in 2008 showed a decrease in nature-based recreation.³

HEALTH CARE COSTS

A 2016 article estimated global health care costs of inactivity at \$53.8 billion.⁴

If inactivity was completely eliminate worldwide a 2013 article estimated 5.3 million lives could be saved every year. Life expectancy would improve by 0.68 years.⁶

These costs may have increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, during which research shows inactivity has increased.⁵

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

Nicky Paquette, Casting for Recovery VT/NH

On the physical level, it's the gentle rhythmic movement of fly casting I think is very good therapy for anyone with the upper body, increases mobility all around. It takes their mind off of them.

Being on the river, in nature, just hearing the birds and the flow of the river. Thinking "I'm going to catch a fish!" That all by itself is therapeutic, I think.

Anonymous St George Community Garden Member

To be outside in the natural light, breathing fresh air, seeing and touching nature rather than watching on TV to me brings a much better awareness of what goes on around you and keeps you grounded when all that white noise is going on around you.

INTERVENTION AND METHODOLOGY

A foldable pamphlet that could be included in primary care offices, as well as other community centers.

Information on:

- General types of outdoor therapy
- Selected resources of outdoor therapy near Hinesburg
- Benefits of outdoor therapy
- Risks associated with outdoor activity

TYPES OF OUTDOOR THERAPY



HIKING

Find nearby walking trails and take a day trip. Bring lunch to have a picnic!

ANIMAL THERAPY

Spend some time relaxing with animals.



GARDENING

Grow your own backyard garden or join a community gardening group.

GROUP EXERCISE

Bring your exercises outside! Stretch, practice yoga, even grab some equipment.



WALKING

Explore your neighborhood. Go alone, grab some friends, or join a local group!

WHAT CAN OUTDOOR THERAPY DO FOR YOU?

Possible improvements in **PHYSICAL HEALTH** such as:

- Reduction in blood pressure
- Weight loss
- Increased cardiovascular function

Possible improvements in **MENTAL HEALTH** such as:

- Enhanced mood
- Increased resilience
- Reduced stress

BEWARE THE RISKS!

TICKS are always a concern in warm weather! Consider wearing tall socks, long pants, and long sleeves when outside. Insect repellent is your best friend. And **ALWAYS** perform a tick check when you return home!

INJURIES are possible when performing physical activity outside. Be mindful of weather conditions, especially in winter. Wear appropriate footwear for the activity, and let someone know where you'll be when outside alone.

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OUTDOOR THERAPY

RESOURCES
for
PATIENTS



A few local
outdoor
resources...

GEPRAGS COMMUNITY PARK



Geprags Community Park offers 1.7 miles of packed dirt trails, less than a mile from Hinesburg village center and just around the corner from Hinesburg

Family Medicine. Trail includes several benches and a barn. Hike/walk in warm weather, cross country ski in the winter. Find a trail map at <https://www.trailfinder.info/trails/trail/geprags-park-trails>

THE HEALING NATURE OF HORSES



Equine therapy sessions offered in New Haven, Vermont. No horse experience needed. Book on AirBnB at <https://www.airbnb.com/experiences/288936>

COMMUNITY GARDENS



Vermont is home to many community gardens throughout the state, often for free or at low cost. Community gardens provide space



SOW & SHARE COMMUNITY GARDEN

Located in Williston, VT, just a few miles north of Hinesburg. Raised beds are \$12 while plots start at \$20.

Reserve online at <https://www.sowandshare.org/>



ST. GEORGE COMMUNITY GARDEN

A free community garden located in St. George, VT.

Reserve through their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/St.GeorgeCommunityGarden>

Want to build your own garden?

Check out Vermont Garden Network for helpful tips on how to garden at home!

<https://vtgardens.org/garden-organizer-toolkit/growing-in-the-garden/>

CASTING FOR RECOVERY



Casting for Recovery is a women's fly fishing retreat for women at all stages of breast cancer - from diagnosis through

recovery. Fly fishing offers mental, physical, and social therapeutic benefits. The motion of fly fishing can help relieve pain such as from post-mastectomy edema, while the relaxing nature of fishing and the company of women with similar health journeys provides a supportive environment. The local VT/NH chapter offers a yearly retreat in both states.

Check out castingforrecovery.com for more information.

DRAGON BOAT FESTIVAL



The Dragon Boat Festival is a yearly rowing fundraiser held by Dragonheart Vermont on Lake Champlain to raise money for cancer

support. No experience required! The festival includes food and drink, entertainment, and of course raffle prizes!

For more information head over to:

<https://dragonheartvermont.org/lake-champlain-dragon-boat-festival/>

RESULTS

Due to time constraints the pamphlet was not circulated, and patient response was not available.

Results we might expect could include:

- Improved awareness and acceptance of the importance of outdoor activity to physical and mental health
- Increased awareness of the variety of outdoor therapies available
- Improved motivation for physical and mental improvement, and reduction in patient reluctance to engage in physical activity
- Increased use of outdoor spaces, such as community parks

EFFECTIVENESS

Potentially utilizing a survey for patients who choose to engage in recommended therapies.

Survey could evaluate:

- Self-assessment of physical and mental health before and after engaging in therapy
- Self-assessment of motivation and intent to engage in outdoor therapy versus other forms of therapy
- Self-assessment of time spent outdoors before and after therapy

LIMITATIONS

There are many, complex issues that may prohibit patients from participating in outdoor therapy, such as:

- Physical limitation
- Transportation difficulties
- Cost

A physical pamphlet also may not reach patients who could benefit the most from outdoor therapy.

A pamphlet can only include a small amount of information and may not have enough variety of resources for patients.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE

A dotphrase that can be incorporated into the EMR system, so that providers can easily provide information to patients interested in the information or identified by the provider.

A larger information system, such as a website, that aggregates all available outdoor therapies across the state, that can be easily provided to patients outside of a single practice.

Addressing limiting factors such as transportation and cost, that could prohibit patients from utilizing resources.

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CONSENT

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. This project is a requirement for the Family Medicine clerkship. It will be stored on the Dana Library ScholarWorks website. Your name will be attached to your interview and you may be cited directly or indirectly in subsequent unpublished or published work. The interviewer affirms that he/she has explained the nature and purpose of this project. The interviewee affirms that he/she has consented to this interview.

Consented _X_

Name: Nickey Paquette, Casting for Recovery VT/NH _____

Name: Anonymous St George Community Garden member _____