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ME/CFS: Exercise goals should be set by patients and not driven by treatment plan, says NICE

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Graded exercise therapy (GET) should no longer be used to treat patients with myalgic encephalomyelitis (or encephalopathy)/chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS), says the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence in long awaited updated guidance.

Patients may still be offered exercise programmes provided they are not based on fixed incremental increases in physical activity or exercise. Instead, programmes should be based around person centred energy management, which is a self-management strategy led by the patient with support from a healthcare professional in an ME/CFS specialist team, the guideline advises.

Energy management should consider all types of activity (cognitive, physical, emotional, and social) that help patients learn to use the amount of energy they have, while reducing their risk of post-exertional malaise or worsening their symptoms by exceeding their limits.

Cognitive behavioural therapy has sometimes been assumed to be a cure for ME/CFS, the guideline acknowledges. Now it should be offered only to help people manage their symptoms, improve their functioning, and reduce the distress associated with having a chronic illness.

[There is more text]

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