ALIGNING POLICY AND EXERCISE MEDICINE AS AN INVESTMENT TOWARDS COMBATTING NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES
Complementary and Alternative Methods to Improve Mental Health

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The WHO constitution states: "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." An important implication of this definition is that mental health is more than just the absence of mental disorders or disabilities. Mental health is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.

But in modern society, mental illness is a major concern, because it is one of the leading causes of years lived with disability globally (Whiteford et al., 2015). Furthermore, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that the total number of people with mental illness exceeded 300 million in 2015 (World Health Organization. Depression and Other Common Mental Disorders: Global Health Estimates. Geneva: WHO, 2017). WHO estimates that between 35% and 50% of people with severe mental health problems in developed countries, and 76 – 85% in developing countries, receive no treatment.

In recent years, increasingly robust evidence suggests that exercise is not only necessary for the maintenance of good mental health, but it can be used to treat even chronic mental illness. On the treatment side, exercise appears to be as good as existing pharmacological interventions across a range of conditions, such as mild to moderate depression, dementia, and anxiety, and even reduces cognitive issues in schizophrenia.

Another non-mainstream treatment used to maintain good mental health is the complementary and alternative approaches. Complementary and alternative approaches is the treatments that are used along with standard medical treatments but are not considered to be standard treatments or mainstream. One example is using acupuncture to help lessen some side effects of cancer treatment. Alternative treatment is treatments that are used instead of standard medical treatments. One example is using a special diet to treat cancer instead of anticancer drugs that are prescribed by an oncologist.

It has been observed that use of herbal supplements, acupuncture, and mind-body techniques such as the use of biofeedback, meditation, deep breathing, massage, Yoga, Tai Chi, Qi Gong and music are quite common among those with psychiatric disorders. Mind and body practices include a large and diverse group of procedures or techniques administered or taught by a trained practitioner or teacher. According to the 2017 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS), the popularity of yoga has grown dramatically in recent years, from 9.5 percent of U.S. adults practicing yoga in 2012 to 14.3 percent in 2017. The 2017 NHIS also showed that the use of meditation increased more than threefold from 4.1 percent in 2012 to 14.2 percent in 2017.

Another potential of mind and body practices is the music therapists practice in mental health settings, there remains a need. According to the American Music Therapy Association (AMTA, 2010) almost 19% of members practise in the area of mental health. Given the substantial number
of music therapists practising within this area it is timely to reflect upon the opportunities for the music therapy profession to develop greater expertise within the specialist area of mental health recovery.

REFERENCES

