

LEISURE-TIME PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES OF PORTUGUESE CHILDREN WITH CEREBRAL PALSY

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Participation is a primary goal in pediatric rehabilitation. Physical activity participation contributes to the health and well-being of children with disabilities. Goal: To describe and compare participation in leisure-time physical activities in children with cerebral palsy (CP). Methods: Sixty-nine children with CP aged 8-18 years (45 boys; mean age 12.75 years) answered the Children's Assessment of Participation and Enjoyment. Diversity and frequency of participation in 16 formal and informal physical activities were described, and compared by age (children; adolescents), gender (girls; boys) and gross motor function (GMFCS I-II; GMFCS III- V) with non-parametric statistics. Results: More than half of children with CP reported participation in 4 informal physical activities (playing games, dancing, walking, and playing on equipments). Participation in formal physical activity is low; swimming was the most reported (42%). There were significant differences between groups on participation in 4 activities.

Regarding diversity, low participation was found for children in GMFCS III-V group in bicycling ($p=0.01$) and playing on equipments ($p=0.044$); for girls in playing games ($p<0.001$) and non- team sports ($p=0.029$); and for adolescents in playing games ($p=0.003$). The frequency was also low for children in GMFCS III-V group in bicycling ($p=0.007$), for girls in playing games ($p<0.001$) and non-team sports ($p=0.026$), and for adolescents in playing games ($p<0.001$) and playing on equipments ($p=0.042$). Conclusion: Rehabilitation professionals should assess and encourage the participation of children with CP in leisure-time physical activities. Attention should be given to girls, adolescents and those with lowest levels of gross motor function.

Keywords: *Physical activity, participation, cerebral palsy.*