

## Guided Diaphragmatic Breathing: Physiotherapy in Intensive Psychiatric Care

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Patients admitted to intensive psychiatric care services experience severe distress due to the acute circumstances of their condition and admission. This pilot intervention is initiated due to a curiosity about what measures patients can benefit from in the acute psychiatric phase. Research claims that diaphragmic breathing can reduce symptoms of distress and improve bodily grounding. The aim is to support patients in achieving bodily grounding including a greater sense of clarity prior to the initial medical assessment. The hypothesis for this study is that a diaphragmic breathing exercise may decrease bodily discomfort. The present study was conducted in the intensive care units of Copenhagen Mental Health Services. The intervention was performed prior to the initial medical assessment of newly admitted patients displaying symptoms of distress and anxiety. Patients with productive psychotic and manic symptomatology were not included. The VAS scale was used to measure bodily discomfort prior to and after intervention in which the patient was guided through a 10 min. diaphragmic breathing exercise. Finally, patients were encouraged to share their reflections. A total of 21 patients participated. The results from the pre-intervention VAS ( $M = 6.10$ ,  $SD = 2.11$ ) and post-intervention VAS ( $M = 4.12$ ,  $SD = 2.15$ ) indicate that the breathing exercise overall resulted in a significant decrease in bodily discomfort for the sample ( $df = 20$ ,  $t = 6,35$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Patients described a greater sense of relaxation, comfort and relief. Two of 21 patients discontinued the intervention due to an increase in bodily discomfort during the exercise.

**Keywords:** Diaphragmic breathing; Bodily discomfort; Acute psychiatry

