Physical activity and the ageing brain
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Abstract
This paper will give an overview on the current evidence in the literature on physical activity as a potential protective factor for the ageing brain. Recently there has been an increased interest in the literature in physical activity as an environmental and modifiable factor and whether it has potential to delay the onset and progression of cognitive impairment in old age. Current hypotheses of the biological mechanisms which aim to explain the positive effects of physical activity on the brain will be discussed. Results of clinical studies with cognitively healthy older adults, participants with subjective memory complaints and mild cognitive impairment as well as with dementia will be critically reviewed. Several questions remain in the quest to develop an effective strategy for health promotion such as what the important exposure time window might be, what type of physical activity, duration and intensity is necessary, how older adults can be best motivated, how to avoid adverse events, how to design research trials and how to best translate findings into the community.