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SHORT COMMUNICATION

Physical activity and successful aging: community-based interventions for health promotion

Actividad física y envejecimiento satisfactorio: intervenciones comunitarias para la promoción de la salud

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ABSTRACT

Aging is a stage of life during which people's health status fluctuates in a variety of ways and experiences some physical health impairments. The issue of how to spend this time healthily has become more pressing as the global aging population rises. In this regard, a significant portion of the scientific literature discusses the benefits of physical activity for older people's overall health. In order to comprehend the potential repercussions of older adults engaging in light physical activity as well as the primary preventive measures, this review sought to evaluate the most recent research on the significance of modest physical exercise. Light physical activity improved older people's functional ability, helped prevent chronic illnesses, and improved their quality of life by preserving their mental well-being. In light of this, it's critical to create and implement training programs that encourage older persons to partake in frequent, light physical activity.

Keywords: Aging; Aged; Exercise; Physical Activity; Health Education.

RESUMEN

El envejecimiento es una etapa de la vida durante la cual el estado de salud de las personas fluctúa de diversas formas y experimenta algunos deterioros físicos. La cuestión de cómo pasar este tiempo de forma saludable se ha hecho más acuciante a medida que aumenta el envejecimiento de la población mundial. En este sentido, una parte importante de la literatura científica analiza los beneficios de la actividad física para la salud general de las personas mayores. Con el fin de comprender las posibles repercusiones de que los adultos mayores realicen una actividad física ligera, así como las principales medidas preventivas, esta revisión trató de evaluar las investigaciones más recientes sobre la importancia del ejercicio físico modesto. La actividad física ligera mejoró la capacidad funcional de las personas mayores, ayudó a prevenir enfermedades crónicas y mejoró su calidad de vida al preservar su bienestar mental. En vista de ello, es fundamental crear y aplicar programas de entrenamiento que animen a las personas mayores a realizar actividad física ligera con frecuencia.

Palabras clave: Envejecimiento; Personas Mayores; Ejercicio; Actividad Física; Educación En Salud.

INTRODUCTION

As the world's population continues to age, maintaining health and well-being is an increasingly important topic. Health education for older people can improve health literacy and, consequently, better health status and quality of life, reduced health spending and improved health knowledge.[1]

Adopting and maintaining a healthy lifestyle also has a significant impact on a country's economic development; the emergence of health problems can increase expenditures on health services and hinder the efficient use of economic resources.[1,2]

Health literacy consists of a person's ability to access, understand, evaluate and apply health information, allowing them to make choices and decide in a more sustainable way regarding their health.[2,3]. The results demonstrate that a high level of health literacy is positively related to better health outcomes.[3]

In this sense, the concept of health literacy has many implications for health care, health education and health promotion and is strongly correlated with social determinants of health, health behaviors and health outcomes.[2,3] In this situation, light-intensity physical activity emerges as an excellent topic for health promotion for older adults.[4]

According to the WHO definition, physical activity is any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure.[5] Physical activity refers to all movements that a person makes in their leisure time, either to and from a place or as part of a person's work or home activities. Physical activity at both moderate and vigorous intensity improves health. Popular ways to be active include walking, cycling, playing sports, active recreation and games.[5]

This article aims to reflect on the use of health education and physical activity literacy as a determinant of successful aging.

DEVELOPMENT

Physical inactivity, which is highly detrimental to an individual's health, is a highly prevalent risk factor for premature death and many non-communicable diseases.[6,7] Many chronic diseases, especially cardiovascular health, occur in individuals who adopt a sedentary lifestyle.[8] A study by Shi and collaborators found that prolonged television viewing was associated with sedentary behaviors, which also reduced the likelihood of healthy aging.[4]

With aging, there is a physical decrease in muscle mass and strength, which is aggravated by inactivity, thus, in sedentary older people there is a decrease in muscle mass, a decrease in bone density and an increase in cardiovascular diseases.[9] Additionally, individuals who adopt sedentary lifestyles and consume high-calorie, unhealthy foods are more likely to experience metabolic syndrome.[10] On the other hand, from a psychological point of view, there are some factors associated with physical inactivity, such as depression and anxiety.[9]

According to WHO data, 3,3 million people worldwide die every year due to physical inactivity, which shows how vital it is to engage in physical activity.[6,7]

On the other hand, individuals who engage in physical activity in their daily lives are at lower risk of developing serious health problems like cardiovascular disease and heart disease compared to those who do not.[8]

It has also been shown that people with higher activity levels have a lower risk of mortality. In the body of an older person who exercises regularly, blood pressure is lower and lipid profiles are healthy, which reduces the risk of hypertension. Light intensity physical activity corrects hormonal imbalances, boosts immunity, improves bone mineralization and improves sleep, which is very important for older people. It reduces the likelihood of obesity by significantly reducing body fat.[11]

Evidence has shown that individuals who practice physical activity increase muscle building and consequently improve muscle mass and strength, which prevents sarcopenia, which is age-related muscle loss. Furthermore, bone density increases and the risk of osteoporosis decreases in individuals who practice physical activity.[12] Additionally, individuals who practice physical activity accelerate metabolism, control weight and reduce the risk of obesity, there is a reduction in the risk of developing type 2 diabetes, increasing insulin sensitivity.[10]

In the psychosocial domain, individuals who experience a feeling of loneliness as they age may experience depression and anxiety, but physical activity can reduce these symptoms. Also, physical activity supports cognitive functions and slows cognitive decline due to aging.[13]

In addition, in a meta-analysis conducted to observe the importance of regular physical activity for reducing the risk of Alzheimer's disease, findings show that physical activity has positive effects on cognitive function, physical performance and independence. It also has positive effects on the cardiovascular and immune systems.[14]

Successful aging is defined as having high physical function, good mental health, and being socially active in older adults. Therefore, mild physical activities affect not only physical health but also many other parameters.[11,15] Thus, it is important for an individual who wishes to act in accordance with this definition to first add light-intensity physical activities to their life.

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For example, an older person who takes walks in their everyday life will socialize and maintain their physical function, thereby improving their health. Therefore, mild physical activities affect not only physical health but also many other parameters.[11,15]

Studies in this field show that regular physical activity can reduce the risk of cognitive decline and even have a slowing effect on the development of Alzheimer's disease. In particular, aerobic exercise (walking, jogging, swimming, cycling, dancing, etc.) has been shown to be highly effective in preserving cognitive function.[14]

Light-intensity physical activity (LTPA) appears to increase the likelihood of healthy aging. Therefore, adding daily activities like walking, gardening or light stretching into your life has a positive impact on your health.[4] Light to moderate intensity physical activities (brisk walking, swimming, stretching exercises, etc.) provide significant benefits for older people.

These exercises improve balance, flexibility, coordination, endurance, mental health, cognitive function and muscle strength. One of the reasons for the high risk of falls in older persons is the prolonged inactivity of muscles. Therefore, older people who engage in physical activity to avoid this situation gain functional independence and avoid the risk of falls and possible body injuries .[14]

In a systematic review study with meta-analysis of cohort studies, an association was found between physical activity and successful aging among middle-aged and older adults. In this study they concluded that being physically active in middle and old age is beneficial for successful aging.[16]

These results are corroborated even in short-term programs, which combine exercise and education, with an improvement in the physical function and social involvement of older people who are resistant in the community.[17]

A systematic review with meta-analysis found that improvement effects are associated with resistance training programs, meditative movement interventions, and active exercise-based video games.[18]

In a systematic review of electronic health (e-Health) interventions used to support the empowerment and education of adults aged 50 and over, effect estimates were found to indicate that e-Health interventions can improve physical activity.[19] These results were collaborated in another systematic review that found that e-health interventions are effective in increasing time spent in physical activity, energy expenditure in physical activity and the number of walking steps .

In this sense, it is recommended that e-health interventions be included in guidelines to improve physical activity in older people.[20]

CONCLUSION

Physical activity programs can contribute to successful aging, due to the effects on the physical, mental and social level of elderly people living in the community.

Psychoeducational interventions delivered in person or remotely (e-health) have positive effects on improving physical and mental health, thus improving quality aging.

The prescription of physical activity and moderate physical exercise is recommended for older people living in the community, due to the benefits it has on health, reduction of early mortality and health costs.

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