

RESEARCH ROUNDUP

Community-based Physical Activity for Older Adults



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Introduction

At APPTA, we strive to find relevant and timely research that has the potential to influence policy decision making for the aging population. One way of doing this is through our Research Roundup series. Our team devotes time to reading and prioritizing academic papers and grey literature, and investigates programming and products that foster innovation related to how we care for older adults. We then summarize that information for a quick and consumable product. These periodical documents will summarize evidence based on relevant policy topics that are discussed through our ongoing stakeholder engagement.

If there are particular topics of interest you would like us to investigate, please let us know by emailing Daniel Smiley, Research & Logistics Specialist, at daniel.smiley@dal.ca.

For this roundup, we are looking at *community-based physical activity for older adults*.

Literature Review

Interventions simultaneously promoting social participation and physical activity in community living older adults: A systematic review

Tcymbal, A.; Abu-Omar, K.; Hartung, V.; Bußkamp, A.; Comito, C.;
Rossman, C.; Meinzinger, D. & Reimers, A. K.

2022, Germany

[Link to article](#)

This literature review focused on articles that had an interventional design, focused on older adults living in the community and measured social participation and physical activity as an outcome. 46 articles published in English were included. The studies were grouped in (1) interventions with main focus on physical activity promotion; (2) social activities that included a physical activity component; (3) health behavior interventions/ health education interventions; (4) multicomponent interventions; (5) environmental interventions. The majority of the reviewed studies reported positive effects of interventions on physical activity and/or social participation. No study reported negative effects. Analysis of quantitative studies showed that multicomponent interventions have great positive effects on both outcomes. In qualitative studies positive effects were found regardless of intervention type.

While multicomponent interventions seem to be most suitable for simultaneous promotion of physical activity and social participation, high variability in measurement methods used to assess both social participation and physical activity in the included studies made it difficult to compare studies and to indicate the most effective.

How to improve recruitment, sustainability and scalability in physical activity programmes for adults aged 50 years and older: A qualitative study of key stakeholder perspectives.

O'Regan, A.; García Bengoechea, E.; Clifford, A. M.; Casey, M.;
Gallagher, S.; Glynn, L.; Doyle, C.; & Woods, C.

2020, Ireland

[Link to article](#)

This study was conducted in Ireland, where community-based physical activity programmes are delivered to groups by state-funded Local Sports Partnerships. Programme attendees, physical activity professionals and community advocates were recruited. 29 people participated in four focus groups and 18 participated in one-to-one interviews.

Data analysis produced three overarching themes. "Age appropriate" explains how communication and the environment should be adapted to the needs of adults aged 50 years and older. "Culture and connection" refer to the interplay of individual and social factors that influence participation, including individual fears and insecurities, group cohesion and added value beyond the physical gains in these programmes. "Roles and partnerships" outlines how key collaborations may be identified and managed and how local ownership is key to success and scalability.

The authors found that successful recruitment, sustainability and scalability require an understanding that the target population has unique needs that must be catered for when planning interventions, communicating messages and choosing personnel.

Literature Review (continued)

“It makes me feel not so alone”: features of the Choose to Move physical activity intervention that reduce loneliness in older adults

Franke, T.; Sims-Gould, J.; Nettlefold, L.; Ottoni, C.; & McKay, H. A.

2021, British Columbia

[Link to article](#)

The objectives of this mixed-method study were to: (1) evaluate whether an evidence-based physical activity (PA) intervention (Choose to Move; CTM) influenced PA and loneliness differently among self-identified 'lonely' versus 'not lonely' older adults and (2) to describe factors within CTM components most likely to promote social connectedness/ reduce loneliness.

Two community delivery partner organizations delivered 56 CTM programs in 26 urban locations across British Columbia. The authors collected survey data from 458 participants at the start of the program, the mid-point (3 months), and upon completion (6 months). They conducted in-depth interviews with a subset of older adults to understand how CTM facilitated or impeded their PA and social connectedness.

PA increased significantly from baseline to 3 months in lonely and not lonely participants. PA decreased significantly from 3 to 6 months in lonely participants; however, PA at 6 months remained significantly above baseline levels in both groups. Loneliness decreased from baseline to 3 and 6 months in participants identifying as lonely at baseline.

They found that health promoting interventions that focus on PA and social connectedness through group-based activities can effectively reduce social isolation and loneliness of older adults. They also noted that research that further delineates mechanisms (e.g., sharing experiences vs. lectures), that modify the effect of an intervention on social connectedness outcomes for older adults engaged in community-based PA programs would be a welcome addition to the literature.

Factors that influence implementation at scale of a community-based health promotion intervention for older adults

Sims-Gould, J.; McKay, H. A.; Hoy, C. L.; Nettlefold, L.; Gray, S. M.; Lau, E. Y.; & Bauman, A.

2019, British Columbia

[Link to article](#)

This study looks at contextual factors influencing the scale-up of the Choose to Move program in British Columbia. The researchers conducted semi-structured telephone interviews with leaders of partner organizations (n=13), recreation managers (n=6), recreation coordinators (n=27), activity coaches (n=36), and participants (n=42).

They found that the program aligned well with organizational priorities and was considered easy to deliver, flexible, and adaptable; the external project team was identified as a critical support; and a lack of sustained financial resources for the program were a potential barrier.

The researchers concluded that even simple programs can be difficult to scale-up and sustain and need to take into account contextual factors.

Literature Review (continued)

Physical activity is good for older adults—but is programme implementation being overlooked? A systematic review of intervention studies that reported frameworks or measures of implementation

Gray, S. M.; McKay, H. A.; Nettlefold, L.; Race, D.; Macdonald, H. M.; Patti-Jean, N.; & Sims-Gould, J.

2021, Canada

[Link to article](#)

This systematic review examined older adult PA intervention studies that evaluated implementation and/or scale-up. Their research questions were: 1. What implementation and/or scale-up indicators (specific, observable and measurable characteristics that show the progress of implementation) were reported? 2. What implementation and/or scale-up frameworks were reported? 3. Did studies evaluate the relationship between implementation or scale-up of the intervention and individual level health/behaviour outcomes? If yes, how?

137 studies were included for research question 1, but none were specified as indicators for scale-up evaluation. 11 studies were guided by an implementation or scale-up framework. 22 studies described a relationship between an implementation indicator and an individual-level health outcome.

The authors concluded that there is need for implementation research that extends beyond analysis at the individual level, includes clearly defined indicators and provides a guiding framework to support PA initiatives in older adults. Such implementation studies should evaluate factors in the broader context (eg, political, environmental) that influence scale-up. Closed access.

Mixed-methods evaluation of Daily Moves, a community-based physical activity program for older adults

Mellow, M. L.; Hull, M. J.; Smith, A. E.; Wycherley, T. P.; Girard, D.; & Crozier, A. J.

2022, Australia

[Link to article](#)

This study evaluated the Daily Moves program in Adelaide, Australia. The program provided participants with personalized plans and information about suitable locally available activities. The study used a mixed-methods approach to evaluate associations between participation in the Daily Moves program and physical activity engagement, physical function and psychosocial wellbeing, and to explore the experiences of Daily Moves participants through qualitative interviews, with a particular focus on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on program participation and enjoyment. The evaluation included 69 older adults with an average age of 73.9; 50 female and 19 male. The researchers found participants reported increased physical activity levels, and improved physical function (grip strength; timed up and go). Qualitative interviews revealed that participants valued the supportive and flexible nature of Daily Moves, and that they felt connected with staff and other participants despite the onset of the pandemic.

Program Review

Choose to Move

[The Active Aging Society \(University of British Columbia\)](#)

Est. 2013

British Columbia

Choose to Move is free and flexible, and provides older adults with the motivation and support to become more active. Choose to Move can help older adults integrate activity socializing into their daily routine. Choose to Move is suitable for older adults who want to become active, regardless of ability. The Choose to Move model is an initiative of the Active Aging Society that was developed by the Active Aging Research Team at the University of British Columbia, with funding from the Government of British Columbia. They assessed the best available scientific research. Based on evidence and experience, the team developed a model to help older adults to become and stay active. Since its creation, Choose to Move has been delivered in partnership with many organizations in over 65 communities, with thousands of older adults participating.

Moving for Life

[Moving for Life](#)

Est. 1999

United States

Moving for Life provides dance exercise and wellness programs in hospitals, community agencies, and fitness centres concerned with health and recovery from illness. They are committed to serving a wide range of people, prioritizing individuals without access to fitness clubs, trainers, and those who otherwise have inadequate health support.

In operation since 1999, Moving for Life began in New York City as a group of volunteers supporting women with breast cancer. In 2011, a contribution from the Komen Foundation allowed them to further develop their programs. Since then, they have expanded their offerings beyond New York City and now work with a roster of 54 Certified Instructors, actively teaching in Cincinnati, the San Francisco Bay area, Tokyo, Amsterdam, and Vancouver. Moving For Life continues to evolve in order to support the needs of communities, including offering a variety of high-quality online classes and lectures.

Program Review (continued)

Geri-Fit

Geri-Fit Company LLC

Est. 1994

United States

Geri-Fit is a tier III (highest level) evidence-based health promotion program and chronic disease self-management support program. Designed exclusively for older adults, Geri-Fit helps rebuild strength that's been lost through the aging process. Any older adult, regardless of their age or fitness level, can participate. It is a progressive resistance strength training program. Most people start out using a set of 2 or 3-pound dumbbells, but they will eventually progress to using heavier weights over time. There's no dancing, floorwork, or choreography to learn and both men and women can enroll. Most of the bodybuilding exercises are performed seated in a chair; even those in a wheelchair can participate. In addition to the strength training component, the program incorporates stretching and range of motion exercises, stability and balance training for fall prevention, cardiovascular activity for heart health, and gait exercises to help improve walking.

Geri-Fit has recently partnered with the University of Texas Medical Branch Galveston (Texas) and Christian City, Inc., who were recipients of the 2023 Empowering Communities to Deliver and Sustain Evidence-Based Chronic Disease Self-Management Education Programs grant.

Move It or Lose It!

Move it or Lose it Ltd

Est. 2010

United Kingdom

Move it or Lose it! exercise classes have been developed by experts to help older adults to improve their flexibility, aerobic health, balance, and strength for greater mobility. All the exercises can be done seated or standing, depending on one's ability.

Move It or Lose It! is lending its support to the NHS #ReconditionTheNation campaign by encouraging people where possible to keep moving and remain independent through their "Get Up and Go" exercises. These exercises can be done from a bed or a chair to aid functional mobility to help people get up, get dressed, and get moving. The simple exercises have been approved by consultant geriatricians, physiotherapists, and exercise specialists. Their instructional videos can be used by older adults or carers, by those in hospitals or care settings, to prevent deconditioning and promote emotional wellbeing.

Program Review (continued)

Zoomers on the Go

University of New Brunswick

Est. 2009

New Brunswick

This program is one of 5 University of New Brunswick projects funded by the Healthy Seniors Pilot Project (HSPP). Zoomers on the Go is a free, peer-led, exercise program for adults 50 years of age and older with the main goal to reduce the risk of falls. HSPP aims to expand the Zoomers on the Go program across the province of New Brunswick, with a goal of making it accessible to all New Brunswickers, either in person or online. The program hopes to reduce the risk of falling, by improving participants' cardio and muscle strength, and reduce the risk of chronic conditions. Reducing the incidence of falls and chronic conditions will positively impact older adults and New Brunswick's healthcare system. Researchers will be evaluating short-term benefits through qualitative measures, along with questionnaires. Long-term benefits will be monitored through linked administrative data at the New Brunswick Institute of Research, Data and Training (NB-IRDT) more specifically to test if hospital admission, surgeries, and visits to physicians are lowered in comparison to others not participating in the program.