Title: Engaging the Aging in Healthy Living

Catherine Szal, BSN
Chamberlain College of Nursing, Chamberlain University, Downers Grove, IL, USA

Session Title: Rising Stars of Research and Scholarship Invited Student Posters

Keywords: Senior Outreach, Socialization and Wellness Activities

References:


Abstract Summary:
Participants will learn about an innovative program designed to remove barriers, provide resources, and empower the vulnerable population of the aging adult. The poster will present a forum that endorses socialization and wellness activities for seniors within the community.

Learning Activity:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEARNING OBJECTIVES</th>
<th>EXPANDED CONTENT OUTLINE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The learner of this presentation will be able to interpret the research to identify the root causes of obstacles that the aging population face.</td>
<td>I. Introduction II. Review of Literature A. Positive effects of sustained physical activity B. Outcomes of socialization programs C. The influence of written goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The learner of this presentation will be able to discuss how the establishment of a community fitness league will support the quality of life for the aging population.</td>
<td>III. Intervention A. Better access to nursing expertise B. Recording and monitoring physiological measurements C. Institution of fitness activities D. Socialization among peers E. Wellness education IV. Evaluation A.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abstract Text:

Medical afflictions affecting the elderly include chronic disease, decreased sensory perception, trauma from falls, isolation, and depression. Insufficient advocacy for the importance of healthy lifestyle choices, combined with a lack of education, deficient resources, and the absence of supportive wellness centers are barriers that impede the quality of life for senior citizens. Evidence confirms the institution of a persistent physical activity regimen sustains a healthy cardiovascular system, prevents metabolic diseases, improves strength, balance, and coordination, and decreases the risk for heart attack and stroke (Hoffmann et al., 2016). Research has proven that socialization programs for older adults prevent withdrawal and isolation, which can lead to feelings of depression and suicidal ideation (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016; Dury, 2014). The added value that socializing brings into the life of the aging adult has been clinically linked to quality of life, wellness, and longevity (Park et al., 2015).

Additionally, recording measurements and setting written goals has been proven to increase accountability for improved outcomes (Ogawa et al., 2016). By incorporating socialization activities with exercise to meet wellness goals, many within the vulnerable population can be encouraged to make healthier choices, while building relationships and meeting physiologic targets for improved outcomes.

The institution of a supportive program to establish exercise classes and organize fitness activities will encourage healthy changes in the targeted population. Recording monthly blood pressure and heart rate measurements, blood glucose levels, body weight, and body mass index quantities will give seniors written goals to pursue improvements. By advocating for accessible avenues to nursing expertise, healthcare education, and state resources, the senior populace will better be able to navigate the healthcare system, and have more control over their healthcare needs. Collaborating interprofessionally with medicine, physical therapy, dieticians, and unlicensed assistive personnel, it will be the responsibility of the community health nurse to oversee patient assessment, establish healthcare goals, council and educate the patient population, reinforce the importance of healthy choices, and allocate state resources to help patients become successful in their endeavors.

Outcomes will be measured to evaluate the success of the program. Community health nurses will evaluate the physiologic measurements on a monthly basis to determine whether each patient has been meeting health goals. Each senior citizen will be assessed to determine attendance, frequency of physical activity, time spent being physically active, and any improvements in strength, balance, and coordination. Through interviews, the nurse can also determine if primary prevention strategies are being transferred into the patient’s personal time. If expectations are not being met, counselling will be provided to offer patients’ additional support. Anonymous program evaluations will be mailed to individual patients to obtain participant suggestions for improvements. A comments box will be available for patient recommendations during monthly meetings.

The institution of this community program will provide benchmark data substantiating its many benefits to a vulnerable population. Advantages of socialization and improved access to nursing expertise, healthcare education, and state resources will demonstrate the value of the initiative. Documented evidence of lower physiologic measurements with increased strength, balance, and coordination will encourage the establishment of supportive programs for senior living. This validation will assist nurses in leading interprofessional collaboration to improve health policy.