

Effect of Physical Activity in Elderly Subjects with Dementia: A Systematic Review

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Abstract

Introduction: Dementia mostly affects elderly adults; it is not a part of ageing. The primary objective of the scoping review is to exercise for elderly subjects with dementia to improve their cognition, activities of daily living (ADLs), and quality of life, reduce neuropsychiatric symptoms and depression and reduce the burden on family caregivers and use healthcare services.

Methods: Literature Search: We systemically searched electronic databases (PubMed, COCHRANE Library) from inception to April 2024.

Eligibility Criteria: Studies involved exercises for dementia subjects were included. Boolean apparatus (and) is used – Dementia and elderly subjects, Dementia and physical activity, Dementia and elderly subjects and physical activity.

Findings of the review: Most of these research papers support the idea that physical activity significantly benefits subjects suffering from dementia. Specifically, it helps to stabilise and improve cognitive function as well as to reduce and delay the onset of neuropsychiatric symptoms such as depression, confusion and apathy. Regular physical activity may contribute to slowing down the progression of cognitive decline. The differential effects of specific types of exercises (e.g., aerobic exercises, strength training, balance exercises and flexibility training) on cognitive function in subjects with dementia.

Conclusion: The evidence shows that physical activity has a major effect on performing ADLs in subjects with dementia. However, there is limited evidence of the impact of physical activity in improving cognitive function and delaying the onset of neuropsychiatric symptoms. There is a need for longitudinal studies to know the long-term effect of physical activity on cognitive function in elderly subjects with dementia.