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Gonçalo Nuno Figueiredo Dias
Micael Santos Couceiro

Active Ageing and Physical Activity Guidelines, Functional Exercises and Recommendations



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Active Ageing and Physical Activity

Guidelines, Functional Exercises
and Recommendations

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Foreword

“Active Ageing and Physical Activity: Guidelines, Functional Exercises and Recommendations”

Globally, the 65+ segment of the population is rapidly increasing. Medical and technological advances over the past century have had a significant and positive impact on the health and overall well-being of our nations’ citizens and longer life expectancies.

Regular participation in physical activity (PA) is essential for maintaining good health, particularly as we age. Considerable research evidence has demonstrated that individuals who are active in their older adult years exhibit lower rates of disease (e.g. cardiovascular disease, diabetes, colon and breast cancer) and disability. In contrast to their physically inactive counterparts, physically active older adults maintain healthier body weights, higher cognitive function and better overall functional health.

Despite the wealth of research evidence that has identified physical inactivity as a key risk factor for a number of chronic medical conditions that result in premature disability and/or mortality in the older adult years, a large proportion of older adults (≥ 65 years) do not currently meet global physical activity recommendations. Older adults ageing with a disability are even less likely to engage in any type of leisure time activity when compared to older adults without disability. This is a particularly troublesome finding given that individuals with disability who regularly engage in physical activity derive similar health benefits. A reduction in the level of functional impairment and improvements in perceived quality of life have also been demonstrated to individuals with disability who participate in physical activity, even at lower levels of intensity.

“*Active Ageing and Physical Activity: Guidelines, Functional Exercises and Recommendations*” promises to be an exceptional resource for any professional working with the older adult population. Drs. Dias and Couceiro address the role of physical activity in promoting active ageing from a multidisciplinary perspective,

combining essential theoretical knowledge of the ageing process and common age-associated diseases with practical information needed to design age-appropriate physical activity programmes that can be safely and effectively implemented by trained professionals.

I look forward to adding this contemporary resource to my professional library and sharing the theoretical and practical knowledge presented in this book with undergraduate and graduate students currently preparing for professional careers working with older adults in rehabilitation and physical activity settings.

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Chapter 1

Introduction: New Paradigms of Active Ageing

Gonçalo Nuno Figueiredo Dias, Micael Santos Couceiro, Polybio Serra e Silva, Maria António Castro, Maria Aurora Branquinho, Rui Mendes and Inês Cláudia Rijo de Carvalho

Abstract The main purpose of this chapter is to describe active ageing as a continuous and unavoidable process. An integrated and holistic approach is needed, which highlights the advantages of psychomotricity and gerontomotricity. Such an approach can decrease physical and social isolation in the elderly, and even help them to find their affordances. Therefore, their opportunities for socialization and recreation can be increased. Elderly quality of life stretches beyond the physical and biological dimensions. Healthy ageing presupposes a dynamic balance between body, cognition and affection. The elderly think, feel and move differently. Therefore, they require special care concerning their physical activity and the management of the organic, nutritional and physiological aspects that affect their ageing bodies. From this perspective, the topic of active ageing comprehends healthy lifestyles and physical activity. These recommendations, which are widely known in Western societies, aim to prevent disease and promote health. In addition, active ageing, in the broad sense, should assume a paradigm shift that adequately responds to aspects related with the increase in longevity, quality of life and health among the older people. According to the state of the art, physical activity can play a crucial role in the protection against age-related morbidity and in the increase of longevity. Regardless of the age when physical activity starts, changes in sedentary patterns, even among those older than 85, can substantially reduce mortality and functional disability. The adaptations introduced in the movement, if performed adequately, may contribute to improve not only individuals' health, but also their quality of life. Finally, physical activity may effectively improve ability by improving several functions of the body, such as strength, flexibility, resistance and general physical aptitude. However, it is necessary to adapt physical activity recommendations to older people, in order to cater for their specific needs. It is also essential to use several types of exercise which can correct or improve the functional limitations identified.

Keywords Active ageing · Physical activity · Quality of life · Health

Areas of expertise: Tourism Management and Planning Modern languages, Literature and Linguistics Gender studies