Promoting physical activity and mental health of older adults

December 6th, 2012 1:00 – 2:30
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Lara Mylly, Whitewater Bromley Community Health Centre

Objectives
- Examine risk and protective factors that influence the health and the well-being of older adults
- Provide an overview of the evidence linking physical activity to positive mental health outcomes for older adults
- Examine best practices in mental health promotion with older adults
- Discuss a physical activity/mental health promotion program directed at older adults

Definitions:
Seniors/Older Adults

Factors that affect the mental health & social well-being of older adults
- Retirement
- Changes in income
- Physical changes
- Loneliness
- Depression
- Changes in social networks
  - Care giving
  - Spousal bereavement
  - Social isolation

Age pyramid of Ontario’s population

http://www.fin.gov.on.ca/economy/demographics/projections/
Risk & Protective Factors – Older Adults

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual level</th>
<th>Risk Factors</th>
<th>Protective Factors</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>loneliness; depression; grief; stress</td>
<td>adaptability; resilience</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>problematic substance use; physical impairment; chronic illness</td>
<td>sense of control; self-efficacy; engagement; optimism</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>poor nutrition; physical inactivity</td>
<td>physical activity; nutrition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inter-personal &amp; Community level</td>
<td>care-giving; bereavement; isolation</td>
<td>social &amp; emotional support</td>
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<td></td>
<td>lack of family support; limited social networks</td>
<td>close proximity to family, friends, social/cultural networks</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>unemployment; retirement</td>
<td>economic security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>elder abuse</td>
<td>volunteer opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Societal level</td>
<td>poverty; income &amp; social status; unemployment</td>
<td>social inclusion, civic engagement &amp; participation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>safety &amp; security</td>
<td>access to economic resources, services and supports</td>
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<td></td>
<td>discrimination; ageism; social exclusion &amp; social injustice</td>
<td>supportive environment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Connection to mental health and physical activity

1. Prevention of poor mental health
2. Improvement in mental health
3. Treatment of mental disorders
4. Improvement in the quality of life of persons with mental illnesses

Why physical activity?:

- Physical activity ↓ risk of several major diseases & physical conditions associated with mental illness
- All but the most frail can participate in some way (e.g., walking)
- Physical activity can involve minimal cost by engaging in activities requiring limited resources & support (e.g., run/walk, swim, bike)

Mental Health & Addictions Issues in Older Adults

- Up to 680 000 older adults are affected by mental health problems in Ontario.
- A misconception of “normal aging”
- Some common mental health issues for older adults:
  - Depression
  - Suicide
  - Anxiety disorders
  - Concurrent disorders

Stigma refers to negative attitudes (prejudice) and negative behaviour (discrimination).

Stigma includes:
- Having fixed ideas and judgments
- Fearing and avoiding what we don’t understand

Source: Canadian Mental Health Association, Mental Health and Addictions Issues for Older Adults: Opening the Doors to a Strategic Framework (2010)

Mental Health

"Mental health is a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make contribution to his or her community."

Positive concept

Mental health > Absence of mental illness

Mental Illness

Disorders which cause a serious disturbance in:
- thinking
- emotions
- behaviour

One in five

Two Continuum Model of Mental Health

(C. Keyes)

Flourishing

1

Serious Mental Illness

No Symptoms

4

Languishing

3


Three Most Significant Determinants of Mental Health

1. Social inclusion
2. Freedom from discrimination & violence
3. Access to economic resources

Keleher & Armstrong, 2006; Mental Health Promotion in Ontario: A Call to Action, 2008

Goals of Mental Health Promotion

"Mental health promotion aims to optimize mental health and wellbeing in communities and thereby in individuals."

(Neuhauser et al. 1998)

Focuses on:
- Enhancing protective factors for positive mental health
- Reducing risk factors for poor mental health
- Influencing some of the broad determinants of health, which contribute to poor mental health
- Health disparities
Social determinants of health

Determinants of health: A range of personal, social, economic and environmental factors that determine the health status of individuals or populations

- Social environment
- Income and income distribution
- Gender, age and culture
- Food security
- Affordable and adequate housing
- Employment and working conditions
- Access to health services

Best Practice Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion Programs: Older Adults 55+

Part of a series of online guides for promoting positive mental health across the life span

Guide includes:

- Eleven (11) best practice guidelines for MHP initiatives re: people 55+ with supporting theory
- Resources to help practitioners to plan & implement MHP initiatives, including exemplary programs
- References

Worksheet for MHP interventions (55+)

|| Benefits increase as physical activity increases. |
| Benefits when starting out: | Benefits from regular physical activity: |
| Meet new people | Better physical and mental health |
| Feel more relaxed | Continued independent living |
| Sleep better | Improved quality of life |
| Have more fun | More energy |

PA as a good ‘fit’:

the aging

- Older adults:
  - ↓ cognition w/age = ↑ depression
  - ↑ fitness = ↑ cognitive performance in majority of cross sectional studies
- Physical activity can be beneficial even for those with severe medical conditions and who are chair bound.
- Benefits accrue even when activity is begun late in life (Spirduso, 1995; Hickey & Stilwell, 1992).

Compelling explanations & practical implications

How exercising your body shapes up your mental health
Why Physical Activity for Older Adults?

- Regular physical activity has been associated with greater longevity as well as reduced risk of physical disability and dependence leading to better mental health.
- A significant reduction of depressive symptoms was reported amongst 439 older adults participating in an 18-month walking program (Penninx et al.). 156 people aged 50 to 77 years were randomized to treatment of depression with medication, exercise, or a combination of both. All three forms of treatment were associated with a significant reduction of depression scores, and there was no significant difference in treatment response between the groups.
- A detailed review of cross-sectional and prospective studies, showed that PA is consistently associated with improved well being and better quality of life in later life (Spirduso and Cronin).

Evidence-based health promotion: mental health & physical activity

Program Example: Fit, Fun and Fully Alive!

- Lara Mylly, Health Promoter
- Whitewater Bromley Community Health Centre
- Lanark Health & Community Services

Overview of FFFA program:

- Cost to maintain FFFA program are covered by combination of allocated program dollars and directed community donations for instructor training, mileage, equipment, space rental etc.,
- CHC role:
  - managing budget and covering costs above,
  - securing community locations,
  - insurance certificate (liability),
  - volunteer management,
  - volunteer training,
  - providing equipment,
  - administrative support,
  - volunteer appreciation,
  - program promotion ...

Fit, Fun & Fully Alive!

Group Fitness Classes for Older Adults

Overview of FFFA program:

- 12 classes offered per week in 7 different community locations within our catchment area (Township of Whitewater Region, Renfrew County)
- Community development approach to program development is based on ↑ community capacity
  - community volunteers are trained as certified Senior Fitness Instructors (SFIs) based on CCAA SFIC training to lead classes in their own communities
What do you like most about the Fitness Class?

- Friendship of everyone who make it enjoyable (22-46%)
- Fun
- Excellent overall workout geared towards seniors without being wimpy
- The instruction is excellent
- The availability
- Variety of exercises
- Getting out
- It doesn’t take a lot of money
- Cardio exercises
- The fact that you can exercise at your own level
- “Me time”

What difference has the FFFA made?

“I have already made some changes because of what I have learned from the Fitness Class.” [1/2 respondents said yes]

- Carry groceries easier
- Try to get more exercise
- Walking more
- Eating better
- Stretching and warm-up in morning
- Made fitness/wt. loss/general health more of a priority
- I use hand exercises to help the numbness in my hands when I knit
- I try harder to do some type of activity everyday, not just Tues. & Thurs.

Your turn…

- What type of health promotion programs for older adults are you involved in?

- What are some opportunities/challenges for engaging older adults in health promotion related to mental health / physical activity?

Organizations for older adults and physical activity:

**Canadian Centre for Activity & Aging**

To develop, encourage and promote an active, healthy lifestyle for Canadian adults that will enhance the dignity of the aging process.

[www.uwo.ca/actage/](http://www.uwo.ca/actage/)

Active Living Coalition for Older Adults

The Active Living Coalition for Older Adults (ALCOA) strives to promote a society where all older Canadians are leading active lifestyles that contribute to their overall well-being.

[www.alcoa.ca](http://www.alcoa.ca)
International Council on Active Aging

The ICAA connects a community of like-minded professionals who share the goals of changing society’s perceptions of aging and improving the quality of life for aging baby boomers and older adults within the six dimensions of wellness. The council supports these professionals with education, information, resources and tools, so they can achieve optimal success.

www.icaa.cc

Exercise: A Guide from the National Institute on Aging

The American National Institute on Aging has produced a guide for people taking their first steps towards an active lifestyle. This guide will show you how to include exercise and proper nutrition to stay healthy as you age. The guide also offers useful tips on establishing and maintaining a regular exercise program.

For more information, visit www.nia.nih.gov

The Physical Activity Resource Centre (PARC)

PARC is the Centre of Excellence for physical activity promotion in Ontario

Managed by Ophea and funded by the Government of Ontario

PARC services support capacity-building, knowledge-sharing and learning opportunities. Services include:

• Consultations & referrals
• Trainings & workshops
• Physical activity resources
• Annual Symposium
• Resource database

VISIT parc.ophea.net

CAMH Resource Center

• The CAMH Resource Centre is a program of the Health Promotion and Prevention (HP & P) Unit within the Provincial System Support Program at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
• Funded by the Health Promotion Division of MOHLTC
• We provide system support, capacity building, content expertise and access to information, research and guidance as it relates to mental health promotion, substance use and tobacco for health promotion and public health audiences in Ontario

CAMH Resources
Thank you!

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