

How To Encourage Physical Activity In Older People With Multimorbidity?

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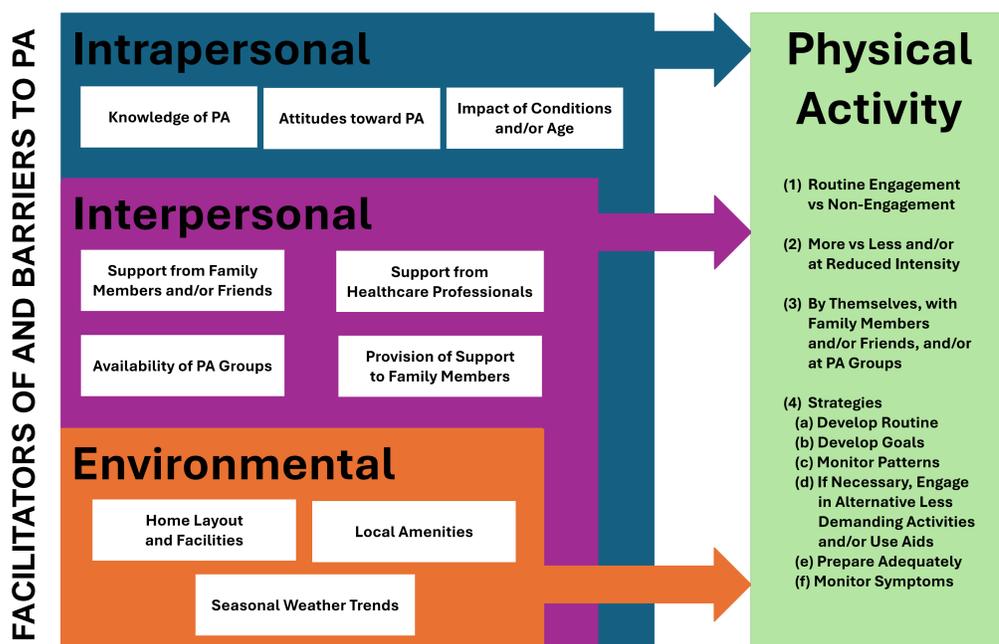
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Background

- As the population ages, the number of older people living with multimorbidity (PwMs) increases (Nguyen et al., 2019).
- Despite its association with positive health outcomes, older PwMs often fail to engage in adequate physical activity (PA) (Vancampfort et al., 2017).
- The aims of this qualitative study were to explore how older PwMs engage in PA, and the facilitators of and barriers to their PA engagement.

Methodology

- Semi-structured interviews with 78 PwMs aged 65 and older in Ireland ($n = 40$) and Belgium ($n = 38$).
- Participants reported at least two of:
 - Diabetes
 - Chronic heart failure (CHF)
 - Chronic heart disease (CHD)
 - Chronic respiratory disease (CRD)
- The data were analysed using a collaborative thematic analysis approach (Richards & Hemphill, 2018).



They (chronic conditions) have slowed me down, I'm not as energetic as I used to be ... that's part of being my age as well ... I couldn't climb hills, I would get a bit breathless, and I can't cycle anymore, but there are a lot of things I can do, I can potter away in the garden ... I would be careful lifting weights, being too energetic at things ... I can walk, yes, on the level usually without any difficulty, life is still good (laughing) ... (Male, 85, CHF & CHD)

I do feel confident because I have done research on it and I can see that it's working ... I've seen even from the time we started it, the group, I can see in myself and other people who started, the progress, it's, it's just amazing that keeping the exercise going like that, it really does benefit you. (Female, 65, CHD & CRD)

Results

- Older PwMs may or may not engage in routine PA (e.g., walking, resistance training, gardening, and/or housework), more or less often since their diagnosis and/or at reduced intensity, by themselves, with family members and/or friends, and/or by attending condition-specific or general PA groups.
- Older PwMs may implement strategies to regulate their PA, including developing a routine (e.g., PA at the same time every day), developing goals (e.g., steps per day), monitoring their PA patterns (e.g., recording steps with a smartwatch), engaging in alternative less physically demanding activities or using aids (e.g., walking aids), preparing adequately (e.g., by having an inhaler on-hand), and/or monitoring symptoms (e.g., heartrate).
- Intrapersonal factors (i.e., knowledge of and attitudes toward PA, and the impact of one's conditions and/or age on PA capacity or necessity), interpersonal factors (i.e., support from family, friends, or healthcare professionals, the availability of PA groups, and the need to support family members), and environmental factors (i.e., home layout and facilities, local amenities, and seasonal weather trends) act as facilitators and/or barriers to older PwMs' PA.

Conclusions

- Multimorbidity poses a complex challenge to older PwMs' PA. They face numerous barriers (e.g., multiple condition-related constraints), which require numerous facilitators (e.g., knowledge of how to engage in safe and effective PA), as well as elaborate strategies (e.g., symptom monitoring during PA), to overcome.
- These findings can inform the design of interventions to encourage older PwMs' PA engagement, providing multiple avenues for targeted behavioural change (i.e., via intrapersonal, interpersonal, or environmental factors).

References

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