

Physical Activity Does Not Provide Health Benefits in Young Only: Advocating to Engage seniors to Get an Active Lifestyle



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Editorial

In the last century, western societies have experienced a demographic shift towards an ever-increasing aging population. Over the last half-century the number of adults aged 70 or over has simply tripled; and by 2025-2030, this population will be growing 3.5 times as rapidly as the general population [1]. Europe may currently lead the world with the highest proportions of older individuals, but this may not last much longer [2]. By 2050, nearly four-fifths of the world's older population will be living in the developing and less-developed regions of the world. Whilst the ageing of the general population is one of the humanity's greatest triumphs, it also confronts societies with enormous medical challenges [3]. Indeed, lengthening lifespan is not necessarily synonymous with extending life in good health and studies suggested that with advancing age chronic and degenerative disorders became more and more prevalent and that multimorbidity is increasing [4]. In addition, it is observed a progressive decline in disability-free life which in turn is associated with an increase in the requirement for assisted living in order for older individuals to perform basic activities of daily living [4]. In parallel, some recent publications and studies highlighting the poor participation rate of seniors in sportive recreational activities [5], and very few were older adults who drive an active lifestyle in the line of the recommendations edited by the American College of Sports Medicine [6].

According to World Health Organization (WHO), 60 to 85% of general population worldwide has a sedentary lifestyle, making it one of the more serious, but yet insufficiently,

addressed public health problems. This issue does not spare the ageing and aged adult population where sedentary behavior is also highly prevalent [7]. Indeed, nowadays physical inactivity, along with poor diet and nutrition, and persisting tobacco use are well fixed in the modern lifestyle leading to the rapid rise of non-communicable and chronic diseases, which are now the first causes of mortality in every part of world. Sedentary lifestyles double the risk of cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and obesity, and increase the risks of colon cancer, hypertension, serum lipid profile disorders, osteoporosis, and mood disorders anxiety, and finally global mortality [8-10]. Among the preventive measures recommended by WHO for non-communicable diseases is, in addition, of course, to tobacco cessation and healthy nutrition (including moderate alcohol consumption) to engage people to get at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity every single day. In addition, governments and policy makers are recommended to generate supportive environments in order to facilitate the population's engagement in this active lifestyle [7].

There is an abundant literature supporting the benefits of regular physical activity on human's health. Regardless of age, active lifestyle is an important component of healthy and active ageing, both in relation to staying fit and healthy, and also as a way to stay mobile and socially included [11,12]. A recent Cochrane systematic review confirmed that aerobic exercise interventions resulted in increased fitness and an improvement in cognitive function in healthy people aged 55 years or over [13]. However, even later in life, evidence suggests that regular

physical activity is not only feasible but also favors physiologic improvements in terms of breaking down and even reversing the age-related decline of cardio-respiratory performances, and mobility and balance [14]. Hence, regular physical activity contributes to extend the period of active and free-disability life [15] and to delay cognitive impairments, and improve the QoL [16,17].

With this aim and perspective, aerobic training appear to be the most effective intervention for improving the overall health status among seniors. Recently, a narrative review of 36 randomized, and 17 non-randomized controlled studies confirmed the above described benefits in people aged 70 years or over [18]. In the view of the global health benefits of aerobic training, definitely, general practitioners and physicians must encourage senior to engage and/or return to an active lifestyle. This will contribute to keep longer autonomous and independent in their daily life the frailer members of our society.

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