

Executive Summary: Creative movement classes to music in a residential aged care facility

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Introduction

This project reports on an investigation into the effects of creative movement classes to music for residents in an aged care facility. It is an attempt to answer the question “Do creative movement classes to music improve the scores for balance, functional mobility and psychological well being for residents of an aged care facility?” An additional aim of the project was to develop a suitable program for such residents, in the hope that it could contribute to falls prevention and enhance the general well being of such residents. An additional aspect of the study was to place it within the context of the growing field of “arts in health”.

The setting was the far south coast of NSW, specifically the Eurobodalla region. The area is known for its high proportion of aged. This particular project was eligible to receive funding from the government funded NSW IRCST because it aimed to address the factors which contribute to falls, as falls have been shown to be one of the largest preventable contributions to hospitalization in the elderly.

The planned intervention included the elements of exercise, as well as dance and music interventions for the elderly population in a residential facility. These combined elements situate the scope of the project within the growing “arts in health” field.

Literature is reviewed which includes effects of music, as well as effects of physical activity and how the various elements can relate to falls and psychological wellbeing. A Cochrane review published in 2009 on the question of “interventions for preventing falls in older people” concluded that group exercise does reduce the risk and rate of falls in the elderly and that these strategies can be cost saving (1). A Cochrane review on the effects of music for this population was less conclusive, and urged that more research into this field would be needed(2). Overall there were numerous examples in the literature which suggested that such a program may well be beneficial for residents of aged care facilities, but there were limited numbers of studies which specifically related to creative movement or dance. An exception was a study which compared effects of dance (Tango) to effects of exercise for sufferers of Parkinson’s disease (3). It showed more favorable results for the Tango group compared to the exercise group.

Method

Design of this project was based on a before and after intervention measurement model. The intervention consisted of once- a- week group movement to music classes for 14 weeks duration. Assessments that measured functional mobility included a “Timed Up and Go” (TUG) test and a balance assessment called the “Tinetti” balance tool. A “Geriatric Depression Scale” was administered which is a useful screening tool that gives a basic measure of the level of depression for the respondent. The music choice for the classes was influenced by the responses to questions regarding music preferences of the participants, as well as recommendations from the literature and the available collection of the researcher.

Results

There were a total of seventeen participants who completed the classes, with the following results being based on those seventeen subjects. The average age was eighty years, with ages ranging from fifty four to ninety-one.

For both the TUG and the Tinetti tests, only two out of the seventeen were classified as being at low risk of falls before the intervention. The remaining fifteen are classified as high risk for the TUG test, and for the Tinetti test seven were identified as moderate risk, and eight at high risk of falls. After the completion of the intervention, both TUG and Tinetti tests resulted in three people in the low risk category for falls. The Tinetti test demonstrated that of

the remaining fourteen, nine were at moderate risk of falling and only five were now identified as high risk.

For the GDS test, the results before the intervention were that ten respondents were classified as normal, three were mildly depressed and four were in the moderate to severely depressed category. After the intervention there were eleven in the normal category, four in the mildly depressed category and only two in the moderate to severely depressed category.

There was some movement between the categories for each test, and the numbers were moving towards the lower risk groups for falls and away from the severely depressed group in the depression scale. A statistical analysis on the results using the Wilcoxon signed rank sum test was chosen for use as it could be applied when there were outliers in the group. The results however, support the null hypothesis: that is, that there was not a statistically significant effect. A number of design and implementation factors are discussed in the report which could potentially improve the outcome of future projects.

Observations revealed that during the establishment phase of the program, it is important to have an experienced practitioner to implement the class, as it may be necessary to adjust the activities to the particular needs and changing capabilities of the participants.

The post assessment comments revealed that 3/17 could not remember doing the classes, revealing some degree of dementia. Most participants, (15/17) stated that they would continue if given the opportunity. A few typical comments from participants are included: *"I do enjoy being on the go"*, and *"I felt I was achieving something"* as well as *"Why has it stopped?"* Overall, participation in the project was a positive experience for the residents and staff involved and represented a uniquely satisfying aspect of the researcher's work.

References

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