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Physical Wellness Programming for Community-Dwelling Seniors in Local Senior Center for Improved Social, Physical, and Mental Well-being

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Introduction

- Capstone project adds to the limited research about physical activity programs created by occupational therapists for community dwelling older adults.
- Highlights the importance of physical, mental, and social well-being for community dwelling older adults.
- Educational module demonstrates community program development to occupational therapy students.

Site Description

- Sunshine Senior Center located in St. Petersburg, FL
- Mission is “to serve as a community focal point to enhance the quality of life for our citizens aged 50 and over.”
 - Offers several services, programs, and exercise classes, along with special events for local seniors.

Summary of Needs Assessment

- Identify program development needs.
- Members wanted more dance exercise classes and a leisure education program.
- Increase amount of exercise programs available to members.
- Members attend center for exercising and socializing.
- Add new activities to enhance psychosocial well-being for the members.



Literature Review Summary

Themes

- Barriers to older adults meeting moderate to vigorous physical activity guidelines created by WHO.
- OT’s skillset to improve individual’s healthy lifestyle choices through habit and behavior change
 - Types of physical activity in which older adults are interested in doing
 - Physical activity effect on physical, mental, and social well-being

Gaps in Community Program Development

- Community programs have limited resources to overcome barriers
 - More research on OT’s role in the community
 - Community health programs designed to be client-centered

Capstone Project Description

- The capstone project was an eight-week physical wellness program for community-dwelling seniors.
 - Dance styles used were line dancing and salsa dancing
 - Movements were modified to be completed in both standing and seated positions
 - Incorporated breathing techniques to decrease stress.
 - Created an Older Adult Toolkit to increase daily activities
 - A hurricane prep event was created to educate seniors on disaster management preparation
- Improved the social, physical, and mental well-being of those participating.
- Created an educational module about developing a physical wellness program for community-dwelling seniors at a community center for the Nova Southeastern University Health and Wellness in Occupational Therapy (OT) course.

Project Outcomes

- 25 members filled out the post-program survey.
- 18 people stated that they had an improvement in their mood since starting the program.
- 17 people stated that they incorporated exercise movements at home.
- 15 members incorporated breathing technique in their exercise routine.
- 12 members stated that they had an increase in daily activities since starting the program.
- Many members stated they really enjoyed the free-style dancing.
- Members stated they enjoyed the new exercises that were incorporated into the program.
- Many people stated that the hurricane expo event was very important, and they learned a lot.

Learning Objectives Achieved

1. Implemented my adult community-based program for 8 weeks and assessed program satisfaction at the end of the 8 weeks.
2. Created a one-week education module that discusses program development focused on the adult population at the community level.
3. Created a program binder for the Sunshine Senior Center to use when they want to use this program in the future.

Implications for OT Practice

- There are many opportunities for occupational therapists to work in a community center.
- More research needs to be completed on occupation-based community programs.
- Create and collect more psychosocial well-being outcome data.
- Consider adaptive programming for decreased cognitive performance.



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References Available Upon Request