

RECREATION IN THE COURSE OF ACTIVE AGEING: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE OPEN UNIVERSITY FOR SENIOR CITIZENS

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INTRODUCTION: Recreation enables social interaction, creativity, personal growth and physical exercise. The choice of leisure activities among elderly individuals depends on motivation, life history and culture. An active life, including recreation and physical activity, contributes toward health and healthy ageing. The aim of the present study was to characterize recreation activities performed by participants in the Open University Open for Senior Citizens and identify the information demands of elderly individuals for improving the program.

MATERIALS AND METHODS: A structured questionnaire was used to characterize the socio-demographic profile and activities of elderly individuals who participate in the project.

RESULTS: Fifty-three elderly individuals participated in the project, 40 of whom answered the questionnaire. The interviewees were predominantly female, aged 61 to 85 years; 43% had a high school education; 28% had a complete university education; 43% were widowed; and 40% were married. Reading was the recreation activity of 83%, following by going out (70%) and traveling (65%). All the interviewees practiced regular physical exercise; 88% went on walks; 15% performed water aerobics; 13% performed aerobics; and 20% went on walks and performed another activity (aerobics, water aerobics, yoga or dance). Walking was the main physical activity among individuals aged 75 years or older (18% of the sample). The results reveal that the group of elderly individuals was active and performed the activities cited in the literature as those best indicated for this age group. The study also found other activities of interest to be explored in upcoming offers of the project, such as dance, tai chi and global posture rehabilitation.

CONCLUSION / CONTRIBUTION TO THE PRACTICE/EVIDENCE BASE OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY: The elderly individuals who attend the open university performed regular recreation and physical activities and should be encouraged to continue doing so due to numerous benefits such activities offer to the process of active ageing.