

How Exercise Can Keep Aging Muscles And Immune Systems ‘Young’ By Gretchen Reynolds

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Introduction

The well-being of the ageing population has been one of the major responsibilities of society. There have been efforts to enhance the economic, social, and health well-being of the elderly. Although tremendous steps have been taken to guarantee good physical and mental health for the aged, much still needs to be undertaken to ensure that they engage in a healthy lifestyle. Evidence has indicated that good dietary practices and physical activities are vital in reducing the occurrence of chronic illnesses while, at the same time, they guarantee enhanced longevity. The paper will analyze an article that stipulates how exercises maintain the immune system and prevent the ageing of the muscles, contrary to the common belief that ageing leads to the weakening of individuals and promotes frailty among the elderly.

Overview Of The Article

According to the article, two inspirational studies on older recreational cyclists have proven that remaining physically active as people get old assists in keeping their immune systems and muscles strong. The experiments augment the expanding evidence that some of the assumptions that people make regarding ageing may be obsolete and that they have tremendous control over ageing compared to how it is considered and perceived by most societies(Reynolds,2018).

The article asserts that ageing is unvarying and unstoppable as the years pass by equally for each individual. However, the responses of the bodies to time differ tremendously, whereas most people become weak, and few remain agile. It is these differences that compelled a group of scientists from Britain to question whether the commonly held beliefs about what is obvious and normal in regard to physical ageing might be incorrect or unlimited and, most importantly, whether people have been disregarding the impacts of physical exercises(Reynolds,2018).

In the Western world, exercise among the middle and old-age population is rarely undertaken, and it is approximated that only 10% of those aged 65 years and above engage in regular workouts. As such, what is considered normal is premised on how old age affects inactive people. Therefore, the British scientists, most of whom are recreational athletes, supposed that physical exercises might have an impact on physical aging and could alter the common belief on the exact meaning of normal

aging. To prove this belief, the scientists opted to experiment on the impacts of physical exercise and sought a group of older men and women who engaged in physical activities and recruited them from local recreational cyclists. The male and female riders that were recruited were aged between 55 and 79 and had engaged in cycling for decades, and covered 400 miles each month. For The study on the risers, which was published in 2014, the scientists measured a wide array of the cognitive and physical abilities of the cyclists and compared them with inactive old people and those who were much younger. The result indicated that the cyclists had balances, memories, metabolic profiles, and reflexes that closely resembled the 30-year-old individual compared to those of the inactive elderly(Reynolds,2018).

Analysis Based On The Sociological Point Of View

The economic, social, and health well-being of the elderly exist within the social structure as they make an important demographic component of society. Generally, the lifestyles of the elderly have changed tremendously in the past few decades. Social isolation, physical inactivity, or cognitive and physical frailty are no longer considered norms and do not necessarily represent the common lifestyles of middle and old-age populations. Whereas some adults experience varied levels of isolation and frailty, some of which are institutional, for most, they occur only during their last years of life(Depp & Jeste,2006). Therefore, most middle-aged and elderly people have the potential to lead cognitively, socially, and physically active lives into their later years if they have the requisite opportunities and economic and social support from the community, friends, and family. From the findings of the article, physical frailty among the elderly is treatable and preventable, presenting a new focus for communities when dealing with the challenges of the elderly(Lieberman & Collen,1993).

The exercise habits differ on the basis of age, disability, income, gender and ethnicity. Old people in higher socioeconomic positions are highly likely to maintain physical activities at a higher level compared with those from lower socioeconomic positions to remain inactive or reduce their intensity of exercise. The difference can be attributed to the availability of opportunities to engage in physical activities, resources, especially financial resources needed to pay for the facilities for physical activities, and family support; hence, those who are affluent can access these factors more easily than those from lower socioeconomic status. Further to this, those in higher socioeconomic groups are likely to be educated with high literacy levels compared to those from lower socioeconomic groups, and hence, they have sufficient knowledge of the healthy lifestyle to lead that includes physical exercises, good dietary practices and access to high-quality health(Swan,2005).

Socio-cultural factors play a crucial role in the lifestyle of the elderly. Ageing is not only a biological process but also a social phenomenon where individuals interact with and are influenced by specific physical, social and cultural environments in which they age. Although the experiences of individuals differ, there are usually common patterns linked to the ageing process among individuals born and raised at the same, and hence, they are influenced by social and historical events(Lieberman & Collen,1993). In this case, it is worth noting that people age within a social structure that is

characterized by unique economic, political, environmental, historical and cultural factors that are manifested at different times, age groups and the state of the life cycle. Further, a range of achieved social attributes such as income and education or ascribed social attributes such as race and gender influence the beliefs and values, either inhibiting or enhancing the opportunities to access leisure pursuits. The array of social differentiation systems can facilitate perceived or real inequalities, influencing the lifestyle or life chances of subgroups or individuals in communities(Swan,2005).

Based on the article, it is evident that much needs to be done to enhance the lifestyle of the elderly, which is vital in enhancing their quality of life and enhanced longevity. In this case, enhanced physical activities through increased exercise have proven to be effective in enhancing their physical and cognitive health. In this case, it is prudent for policymakers, families, communities and other stakeholders to strategize on how they can enhance the physical activities of the elderly, and this can be attained by establishing facilities for exercises, raising awareness on the essence of physical activities, offering resources especially financial support for families and communities to enable them to support the initiatives aimed at enhancing the lives of the elderly. However, it is prudent to take into account unique cultural and social factors of the individuals and communities when raising awareness and implementing the initiatives that enhance physical activities among the elderly to ensure community support and enable people to understand them effectively for easy implementation(Depp & Jeste,2006).

Conclusion

The article offers a new paradigm on how the health and social well-being of the elderly should be considered. Physical exercises have been proven to enhance the cognitive and physical health of the elderly and can be instrumental in reducing the challenges faced by the elderly who lead inactive lifestyles. While taking into account the socio-cultural factors, raising awareness, developing facilities and providing requisite resources are vital in encouraging the elderly to engage in physical exercises.

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