



Abstract Title: Recreation for mental health: Older adults overcoming barriers

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Introduction

Leisure and recreational activities have many health benefits, but people with a mental illness, and especially older adults given that they may also have physical health challenges, often face personal, social and environmental barriers to accessing such activity. This research evolved from an interdisciplinary collaborative project focused on overcoming barriers and creating inclusive and welcoming leisure and recreation environments. While unintentional, in the initial study, there was little representation of older adults as participants in the research. As Galenkamp and Deeg (2016) report, a focus on 'active ageing', defined as "the process of optimizing opportunities for physical, social and mental wellbeing throughout the life course in order to extend healthy life expectancy, productivity and quality of life in older age" (p. 87) is key. In order to support active aging, overcoming barriers to participation in leisure and recreational activity is essential.

Objectives

This oral presentation will present a) the barriers that impact social/leisure/recreation participation faced by older adults who have a mental illness, and b) recommendations for addressing the barriers, from a social ecological perspective.

Methods

This study uses qualitative methods to draw on "first voice" perspectives using 3 approaches: 2 focus groups, 5 key informant interviews, and 5 go-along interviews, in one urban and one rural area. The data will be coded using the six-phase approach to thematic analysis (Gray, 2014).

Results

In our preliminary research, barriers that arise from within the person (intrinsic) or those that are imposed by, or perceived from, the environment (extrinsic) were found. This information will provide a framework for examining the findings of the current study which will be completed for this presentation. The findings will support the team to engage in integrated knowledge translation by focusing efforts toward the development of contextually relevant evidence-based practices (bringing recreation practitioners and mental health services together) that consider “first-voice” perspectives of older adults and the Nova Scotia context.

Conclusion

Leisure and recreation provide a valuable but underused context to support health and well-being for individuals with a mental illness. If barriers can be overcome, they hold much promise to promote health and well-being.

References

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Cite this document in APA:

- White, C.M., Hutchinson, S., Gallant, K., & Hamilton-Hinch, B. (2018, September). *Recreation for mental health: Older adults overcoming barriers*. Paper presented at the Healthy Living, Healthy Life: Collaborative Health Conference on Research, Practice and Community Innovations Conference, Dalhousie University, Halifax, NS. Retrieved from <https://ojs.library.dal.ca/HLHL/>

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