

DEVELOPING RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES WITH OLDER ADULTS LIVING IN LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES: AN EXPERIENCE REPORT

*DESENVOLVIMENTO DE ATIVIDADES RECREACIONAIS COM IDOSOS
INSTITUCIONALIZADOS: RELATO DE EXPERIÊNCIA*

**Flávia Souza Rosa Brandão¹, Mariana Lima de Moraes Inocêncio²,
Marcio Antônio Stefani³, Vinícius Souza Brandão⁴**

¹Professor at Faculdade de Medicina de Olinda (FMO); ²Student at Faculdade de Medicina de Olinda; ³Student at Universidade Católica de Pelotas (UCPel); ⁴Student at Universidade Católica de Pernambuco (Unicap)

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ABSTRACT

The demographic transition has resulted in population aging and a search for care for older adults, increasing the demand for long-term care facilities. This experience report aimed to describe the experience of medical students in one of these institutions using the problematization methodology. The inclusion of recreational activities in the daily lives of older people improved cognitive impairment and self-esteem, providing collective integration and experiences that were different from their routine. The proposed activities promoted the integration of older adults and improved their quality of life and self-esteem.

Keywords: Aging, Long-stay Institution for the Elderly, Elderly, Quality of Life.

RESUMO

A transição demográfica tem como consequências o envelhecimento populacional e a busca por assistência à pessoa idosa, expandindo a procura por instituições de longa permanência de idosos. O objetivo deste estudo foi descrever a experiência vivenciada por estudantes de medicina em uma dessas instituições. Foi um estudo descritivo do tipo relato de experiência, realizado de acordo com a metodologia da problematização. Foi perceptível que a inserção de atividades lúdicas no cotidiano dos idosos contribuiu para a melhora do comprometimento cognitivo e da autoestima, proporcionando-lhes integração coletiva e vivências diferenciadas da rotina habitual. As atividades propostas promoveram a integração dos participantes, a melhora da qualidade de vida e da autoestima dos longevos.

Palavras-chave: Envelhecimento, Instituição de Longa Permanência para Idosos, Idoso, Qualidade de Vida.

INTRODUCTION

Over the last few decades, Brazil has been presenting significant changes in the age pyramid due to increased life expectancy and reduced birth rates. According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, the older population is expected to be larger than the young population in the next decades¹. These changes promote population aging and the need for adaptation focused on older adults, increasing the demand for long-term care facilities (LTCF)².

Although Brazilian public health policies prioritize the family as the provider of care for older adults, the LTCF often becomes an important alternative to ensure care, quality of life, and satisfaction for older adults and their families. However, many institutions need help with human, physical, and financial resources, including a shortage of healthcare professionals and qualified caregivers. Thus, the Brazilian LTCFs face the challenge of complying with public health policies aimed at caring for the health of older adults and their limitations³.



SPACE OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Older adults living in LTCF are more likely to be less active, resulting in sedentary lifestyles that reduce physical fitness and increase diseases related to the lack of physical activity and leisure. Therefore, exercise practice for health promotion can minimize these factors in this population⁴.

Aging is also associated with reduced functional capacity, considering the biological, psychological, and social changes of this phase. Amnesia, difficulty in concentrating on an activity, and memory loss are common complaints during aging, especially when difficulties appear in remembering names, words, topics, and places where objects have been left^{4,5}.

The inclusion of recreational activities in the daily lives of these people is important for improving the cognitive impairment and self-esteem of older adults living in LTCF, bringing various benefits to them. During the development of the tasks, emotions, affectivity, and coexistence can be addressed, reducing the level of anxiety and distress, as well as psychological and cognitive functions⁵.

Recreational activities can minimize the impact of common stressors in the routine of older adults because the formation and interaction of work groups benefit the expression of feelings and communication. Thus, efforts to ensure the functional, mental, and cognitive capacity of older adults are crucial, and it is important to invest and adapt public health policies in actions to promote, prevent, and control diseases that occur in this population⁶.

In this context, the activities developed by the students were key interventions for active aging and maintaining the autonomy of this population, following the objectives and guidelines of the National Health Policy for Older People⁷.

OBJECTIVE OF THE EXPERIENCE

To describe the experience of medical students in an LTCF in the municipality of Abreu e Lima, Pernambuco.

METHODOLOGY

This experience report was described according to the problematization methodology using the five stages represented in Charles Maguerez Arc8. This methodology allowed students to

develop activities based on the reality in which the older adults were inserted, making it possible to change that reality.

The activities were proposed through visits to an LTCF located in a municipality in the metropolitan region of Recife (Pernambuco), in the area covered by the Timbó Basic Health Unit. This institution provides comprehensive care for 12 older adults.

After exploring the site, identifying the residents and staff, and being informed about the needs and difficulties, the students planned the activities considering the physical and cognitive conditions of older adults and the infrastructure of the LTCF.

RESULTS

The experience of the students at LTCF began during the practical activities, with a presentation of the infrastructure and knowledge of the trajectory and the difficulties faced there. In this way, the students observed the reality of older adults and gathered information about their characteristics.

The students proposed recreational and interactive activities to stimulate the cognitive and neuropsychomotor development of older adults. Activities were divided into several moments according to the planning and the conditions of each older adult.

To implement the activities, the students provided the materials needed, including interactive games, pencils, brushes, reams of paper, glue, and scissors.

The activities provided collective integration and cognitive stimulation for the older adults, which enabled different experiences from their routine. The students realized that simple, low-cost activities can directly stimulate the cognition and motor coordination of older adults, improving their quality of life.

After the activities, the students observed continuous progress in older adults, improving their quality of life and self-esteem.

Thus, recreational activities were essential to promote active and healthy aging due to the interaction provided between the older adults of the LTCF. Moreover, gains related

to cognitive stimulation and their happiness at enjoying moments of integration and relaxation were noticeable, allowing them to experience a sense of well-being.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the new social configuration that shows the increase in older adults in Brazil, the proposal of recreational activities in the LTCF has fostered integration among older adults and allowed them to realize that they are not the only ones experiencing problems. Activities also promoted positive changes, such as greater interaction, communication, strengthening bonds, and reduced isolation. Last, older adults must be integrally stimulated to minimize the consequences of aging, concerned not only with biophysical aspects but also with motivational and social aspects.

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