

Quality of life, Body Image and Body Composition of Elderly people attending University Third Age.

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Introduction:

The aging process is associated with the decrease of free fat mass which consists of all residual tissues and substances, including water, muscles, bones, connective tissues and internal organs (Heyward & Stolarczyk, 2002) and with an increase in body fat; these changes in the body composition may influence the perception of the body image. According to Matsuo et al. (2007), elderly women who practice a guided physical activity have a positive assessment of their own body image, which could be related to the benefits of physical activity practice, such as the increase of muscular strength and flexibility, and the cardiovascular capacity improvement. The investigation of the factors that interferes with elderly welfare and quality of life provides theoretical and methodological subsidies for structuring action and policy in the health area, seeking to meet the demands of this population (Sonati et al, 2010).

Objectives:

To check the quality of life and body composition of elderly women who practice physical activity and to correlate their free fat mass and the issues about health, quality of life and physical appearance acceptance.

Methods:

This study has analyzed body composition through bioelectrical impedance (Rech et al, 2008) with BIA 310e analyzer, issues on health (Q2 = How satisfied are you with your health?), quality of life (Q1 = How would you assess your life quality?) and body image, (Q11 = Are you able to accept your own physical appearance?), through a WHOQOL-Bref instrument (Whoqol-Group, 1998). The population was of 350 elderly people, registered at physical activity program of University of Third Age(UTA) in Piracicaba - São Paulo - Brazil, with 81 individuals who met the inclusion criteria, which were the following: being 60 years-old or more; females; registered into physical activity program of UTA; not having any kind of cancer disease, amputation, pacemaker; not presenting any

symptoms of high blood pressure, not taking diuretics and signing up the free and enlightened agreement term.

The elderly's group was subdivided into age groups of 60-64 years-old (n = 21); 65-69 (n = 29) and more than 70 years-old (n= 31). For descriptive analysis and data correlation, BioEstat 5.0 program was used. Shapiro Wilk's test was used for normality testing and after that; the Spearman's correlation was carried out.

This research had the approval of the Ethics Committee at Research of Medical Sciences College of University of Campinas, under the protocol number 622/2008.

Results:

The sample consisted of 81 women with 60 and 80 years-old and the age average (\pm standard deviation, DP) for each age group was 62.14 ± 1.53 years (60-64 years), 67 ± 1.49 years (65-69 years) and 72.68 ± 3.10 years (above 70 years).

There were no significant differences among the issues on general quality of life, health and body image in the three age groups; however, a lower physical appearance acceptance was observed in elderly women over 70, an age group where free fat mass was lower and the correlation between body image (Q11) and health (Q2) issues were also positive. Elderly between 65 – 69 years-old presented larger quantities of free fat mass when compared with the age group of 70 years, and positive correlation between body image and health, and body image and free fat mass. The age group between 60 and 64 did not present any correlation between the studied variables, in spite of being the group with the highest amount of free fat mass.

Conclusions:

There is a lower acceptance capacity of physical appearance in elderly over 70 years-old when compared with the youngest ones; this fact was not related with free fat mass, and contrary to what was found for the elderly between 65 and 69 years-old, who presented a better acceptance of their physical appearance, when compared with the youngest ones presenting relation between free fat mass and health. Association among free fat mass, health and body image was evident at the age group between 65 - 69 years-old, which can characterize a concern about aging factors influencing future quality of life. This study shows the needs of physical activity work, mainly with adults and elderly women

between 60 - 65 years-old, so as to guarantee a protection against deleterious aging effects.

References

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