

Publication

An exercise programme for community-dwelling, mobility-restricted and chronically ill older adults with structured support by the general practitioner's practice (HOMEfit). From feasibility to evaluation

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Programmes containing health-enhancing physical exercise should be evaluated using standards that are just as rigorous as those required for drug development. In contrast to new medicines, exercise programmes are highly complex. This has to be taken into account when designing the research plan. In order to illustrate the development process of a "complex intervention", we use the example of an exercise programme for community-dwelling, mobility-restricted and chronically ill older adults. Based on a framework for evaluation of complex interventions (Medical Research Council [MRC], UK), a research plan was set up containing the phases: development, feasibility, evaluation, implementation. The development phase resulted in the design of a home-based exercise programme in which the target group is approached and supported via their general practitioner and an exercise therapist. A feasibility study was performed. Three quantitative criteria for feasibility (adoption, safety, continuing participation) were statistically confirmed which permitted the decision to proceed with the research plan. So far, the MRC framework has proved to be valuable for the development of the new programme.

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