

Publication

The general practitioner's role in promoting physical activity to older adults: a review based on program theory

JournalArticle (Originalarbeit in einer wissenschaftlichen Zeitschrift)

ID 4479556

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Year 2012

Title The general practitioner's role in promoting physical activity to older adults: a review based on program theory

Journal Current Aging Science

Volume 5

Number 1

Pages / Article-Number 41-50

Positive influences of physical activity both on many chronic diseases and on preservation of mobility are well documented. But chronically ill or mobility restricted elderly living in their own homes are difficult to reach for interventions. The general practitioner's (GP) surgery offers one of the few opportunities to give advice for physical activity to those people. We used program theory to sound out knowledge on GP-centered physical activity counseling. The "conceptual theory" (evidence for training effects in old age) and the "implementation theory" (unique position of the GP) were reviewed narratively. The "action theory" (effects of GP counseling) was reviewed systematically. According to program theory, appropriate MeSH (Medical subject headings) concepts were Aged OR Aged, 80 and over (Target group), Physicians, Family OR Primary Health Care (Implementation/Setting), Counseling OR Patient Education as Topic OR Disease Management OR Health promotion (Intervention), Exercise OR Motor Activity OR Physical Fitness OR Sports (Determinants). The resulting six review papers (Pubmed, 2000-2009) were presented using the STARLITE mnemonic. Authors agree, that the GP plays a central role in the promotion of physical activity to elderly people, but there is conflicting evidence concerning counseling effectiveness. Utilizing behavioral change strategies and the collaboration between GPs and specialised professions are recommended and currently under research.

Publisher Bentham Science Publishers

ISSN/ISBN 1874-6098 ; 1874-6128

edoc-URL <https://edoc.unibas.ch/64152/>

Full Text on edoc No;

Digital Object Identifier DOI 10.2174/1874609811205010041

PubMed ID <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21762090>

ISI-Number MEDLINE:21762090

Document type (ISI) Journal ArticleReview