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ABSTRACT 84

The Cultural Perspectives of Physical Activity and Its Barriers in Older Malays with Type 2 Diabetes

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Background Regular physical activity in older persons with type 2 diabetes has many health benefits. However, participation rate remains poor. Defining physical activity and its barriers has been extensively reported, however, few studies explored cultural contributions to perceptions of physical activity.

Objective To explore the cultural definition of physical activity and its barriers in older Malays with type 2 diabetes.

Methods A qualitative case study was conducted in a primary care clinic in Selangor, Malaysia. Four focus groups were conducted. A total of 25 Malay participants aged ≥ 60 years with type 2 diabetes, who were either sedentary or did regular exercise were purposively recruited. They were asked to explore the meaning of physical activity and its barriers. The focus groups' duration ranged from 1-1.5 hours and were audio-taped, transcribed verbatim, translated and analysed using thematic analysis with the QSR NVivo 8 software.

Results A core theme that emerged in the defining physical activity and its barriers was spirituality. The participants described the Muslim prayers (*solat*) as a form of physical activity. The movements during the prayers were described as stretching exercises. Furthermore, undertaking the 5 times a day prayers was perceived as basic form of exercise. Participants also reported that attending religious classes to enhance one's knowledge in preparing for life hereafter takes priority to other activities. They reported that through the knowledge gained from classes, the social interactions and commuting to classes by walking kept them active physically, mentally and spiritually. Hence, engagement in regular physical activity was perceived as the least of their priorities.

Conclusions The spiritual activities seem to deter some older Malays with type 2 diabetes from performing regular exercise. It is fundamental to emphasise in self-care management that regular exercise not only improves glycaemic control but allows them to continue with their religious affiliations healthily.

Keywords: physical activity, spirituality, older Malays

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