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ABSTRACT 146

THE EFFECTS OF THE LIVING LONGER LIVING STRONGER COMMUNITY STRENGTH TRAINING PROGRAM ON THE INCIDENCE OF SOCIAL ISOLATION IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

TRENGOVE, NATHAN J T, COUNCIL ON THE AGEING WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Social Isolation, Mental Health, Physical Activity, Social Interaction, Community Engagement Living Longer Living Stronger TM (LLLS) is an evidence based strength training program that encourages and supports change in the health and fitness sectors to achieve improved health, quality of life and fitness for people aged over 50 years.

The program is currently funded by the Western Australian State Department of Health in the area of falls prevention. The program has over 70 locations across Western Australia and continues to grow, with the majority of providers in the Perth Metropolitan area, larger country towns and some isolated areas. The program is attended by an estimated 8,000 per week.

In 2009 it became evident that the LLLS program was not only improving the physical health and well being of its participants but was also becoming a tool in the fight against social isolation in the latter years of one's life.

A survey was undertaken over a three month period with the aim to collect data on the social activities of each program provider and participant.

Statistics obtained from service providers (those facilitating the program) showed 100% provided an area and morning/afternoon tea for participants post exercise session. 73% of participants on average per session stayed to interact socially with their peers and LLLS staff members. 67% of providers also provided structured functions such as Christmas or Easter lunch and program Awards Nights on a regular yearly basis.

Participant results indicated 44% had become more actively involved in their community, 72% had made new friends they interacted with outside of classes and 36% felt mentally and emotionally better off by attending classes and interacting with their peers.

Results indicate the LLLS programs success as a tool in the fight against social isolation in Western Australia and has implications interstate and internationally.