

Using a Cultural Approach to Promote Exercise in Older Adults

Lori Martin-Plank, PhD, FNP-C, GNP-BC

Family and Geriatric Nurse Practitioner

Clinical Faculty, University of Arizona College of Nursing

Does This Look Like Work—or Fun? Framing the Context—Passing the Traditions



Neighborhood Celebration



Latina Salsa Dancers and Gardeners

What is the Evidence?

- 40.3 million adults >65 years in US in 2010
- By self-report, 28%-34% of those 65-74 are physically active; 35%-44% of those 75 years and older are physically active(gerontology.usc.edu).
- There is wide variability in statistics and self-report usually overestimates the effort.
- Looking at older adults from a variety of cultures, traditional activities such as dance and Tai chi tend to be favored by older adults in the culture.
- **Hwang & Braun (2015)** performed a systematic review of 18 studies from North and South America, Europe, and Asia looking at the effectiveness of dance on the health of older adults, including those with pre-existing medical conditions. Included ballroom, contemporary, cultural, jazz, and pop.
- Improvement in muscular strength, balance, endurance, functional fitness in all groups.

What is the Evidence?

- ▶ Belardinelli et al (2008) studied waltz dancing in 130 Italian men with heart failure (NYHA Class II-III). Stable heart failure, alternated slow with faster dancing. Outcome showed that this was equivalent to aerobic exercise and was safe and enjoyable.
- ▶ In a later study, Kaltsatou et al, (2014), offered an 8 month intervention with 51 Greek men with NYHA II-III heart failure, randomizing them to traditional Greek dancing or formal exercise training. Both groups showed comparable benefits; the dance group also had increased motivation to continue.
- ▶ Kim et al (2011) conducted a 6 month pilot RCT study with 38 elderly Korean men with metabolic syndrome, using Korean dance 2x/week, to assess effect on cognitive function.. The intervention group experienced improvement in verbal fluency, word list recognition and verbal recall. Neither group improved in physical measures associated with metabolic syndrome.
- ▶ Aguiñaga & Marquez (2017) have an ongoing study using dancing with Latinos with mild cognitive impairment to see if the dancing will delay further decline.

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Senior Irish Dancers in St. Patrick's Parade



Senior Dancers at Polka Festival

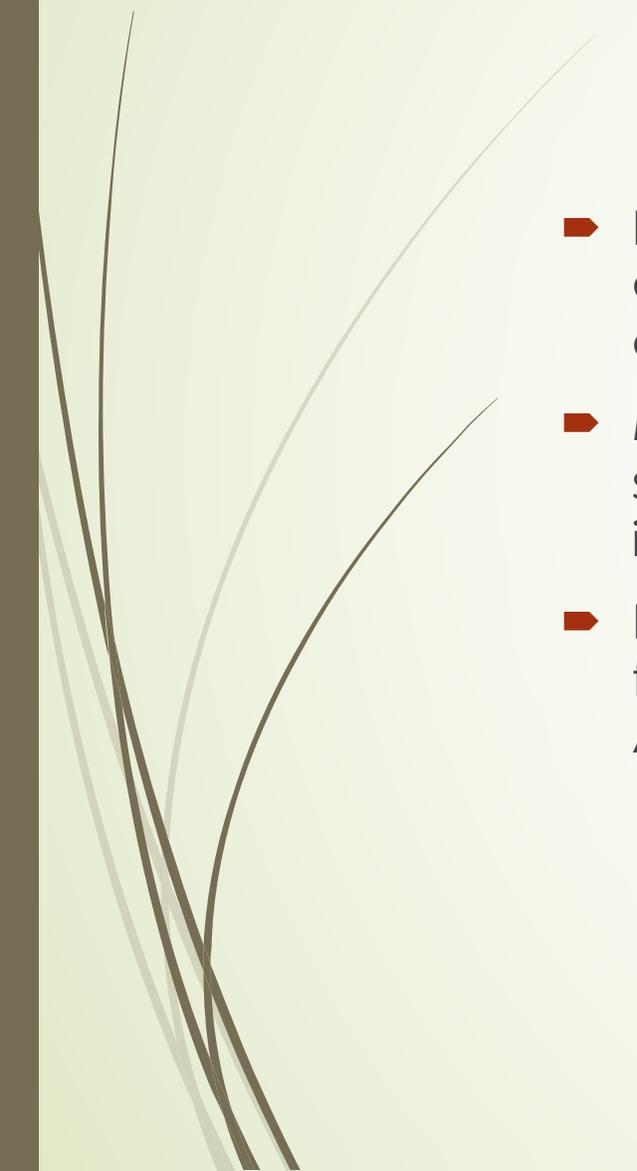


Factors to Consider in Planning a Dance Program for Older Adults

- ▶ In two focus groups conducted by Lin et al (2007) with Taipei elders and those living in the U.S., environment—safety and lack of space, and family caregiving-- was cited by Taipei older adults as barriers to traditional exercise like Tai Chi. Companionship while exercising was important. Taiwanese elders living in the U.S. also used Tai chi but found the atmosphere (encouragement by adult children) stimulating and reported “internal motivation” from those around them who exercised.
- ▶ In two different cultural groups in the Philadelphia area, I found that older Puerto Rican adults wanted to pass on the traditions of dancing to the next generation in North Philadelphia. Despite some women having bilateral total knee replacements, they danced at the many intergenerational celebrations in the community.
- ▶ Irish American older adults took dancing lessons and joined an Irish group that participated in multiple Celtic events in the PA-NJ area of the US, including visits to nursing homes.



Final Thoughts



- ▶ Dancing is fun, invigorating, and cardiovascular exercise for most older adults. The accompanying music stimulates certain areas of the brain that are involved in cognition and movement.
- ▶ Many dances can be adapted to those in long-term care, using chairs for support or seated exercises. The addition of musical instruments can be inclusive for all, even those who cannot physically dance.
- ▶ Research results are mixed regarding the benefits of dance in decreasing falls--some say yes (Hwang & Braun, 2015) , while others say no (Fernández-Argüelles et al, 2015; Merom, et al, 2016). This area is ripe for further study.

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