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PREVENTIVE HEALTH IN A CHANGING WORLD

Insights on the influence of chronic musculoskeletal pain on physical activity amongst the Singaporean middle-aged: A qualitative study

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Background

Physical activity (PA) is an integral part of the management plan for chronic diseases such as diabetes mellitus. Ground sensing by local statutory boards found that adults 40-70 years old do not engage in sufficient PA because of musculoskeletal aches and pains. However, pain as a factor influencing PA has not been explored considerably in Singapore.

Aim

This study will focus on exploring the breadth of perceptions middle-aged (45-65years old) Singaporeans have of their aches and pains and the barriers and enablers faced to engaging in PA.

Methodology

Residents aged 45-65 who spoke English (n = 22) were identified. The interview comprised a series of interviewer-administered questionnaires and a semi-structured qualitative interview.

Key Findings

After coding and thematic analysis, we classified the findings into three main themes: pain management behaviours; barriers and enablers to PA; and outreach for pain- or PA-related programmes. Barriers and enablers to PA were further analysed as intrinsic (beliefs, mood and PA habits) and extrinsic (social relationships and the environment).

Conclusion & Recommendations

Our study suggests that the problem is not the presence of pain, but what people believe and how they respond. Addressing misconceptions is key to getting the large number of middle-aged Singaporeans who suffer from aches and pains to engage in PA. Our findings can provide actionable insights for a number of local stakeholders to consider in their work. They also help fill a current paucity of literature on both the topic and the target demographic, and lay groundwork for further research.