

Preventing and Managing Depression in Older Adults

A Scoping Review on Various Self-Care Interventions

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Objectives

- ❖ To educate older adults (aged 65+ years) on how to identify early signs and symptoms of depression.
- ❖ To identify various self-care strategies that older adults can use to manage and prevent depression.
- ❖ To increase awareness of various support services available within the community.

Background Information

- ❖ Depression is not a normal part of aging, and older adults face stigma when seeking for help (Robinson et al., 2015).
- ❖ Older adults face various challenges that come later in life such as, retirement, loss of significant loved ones, medical problems, increased isolation, and fewer coping resources that may hinder their ability to enjoy life, putting them at an increased risk of depression (Di Benedetto et al., 2014; Shapira et al., 2007).
- ❖ Depression is also more common in people who have chronic illnesses; 80% of older adults have at least one chronic illness, and 50% of older adults have two or more (CDC, 2015).
- ❖ Depression is often mistaken for grief; it is important to be able to differentiate between the two:
 - ❖ **Grief** is an emotional response in which a person experiences a flux of emotions, and includes both good and bad days. During grief, a person can experience moments of pleasure or happiness (e.g. laughing at a good joke, appreciating beautiful weather, and etc.; Robinson et al., 2015).
 - ❖ **Depression** is a constant feeling of despair and emptiness, and **is not always accompanied by sadness**. The person may experience a lack of motivation, low energy, and aggravated physical problems (e.g. arthritis, pain, headache, and etc.). There may also be a loss of appetite, sleep disturbances, loss of self-worth, substance abuse, and thoughts of committing suicide (Robinson et al., 2015).
- ❖ Older adults are often misdiagnosed and undertreated, resulting in high rates of depression. If left untreated, depression is linked to high rates morbidity and mortality (CDC, 2015; Eli et al., 2007).
- ❖ Therefore, it is important to increase awareness of signs and symptoms of depression in older adults and teach various self-care methods to prevent depression

Methods

Research Question

What is known from existing literature about self-care interventions that can be used by older adults to prevent or manage depression?

Search Strategy

- ❖ Scoping review search strategy was used to look at the database from 2005-2015.
- ❖ Google search was used to find grey literature, and CINAHL was the major database used to search for scholarly literature. The search terms included: "preventing depression," "older adults," "signs and symptoms" & "strategies."
- ❖ The limits used in the CINAHL database were: "aged 65+ years" and "peer reviewed."
- ❖ For the initial search strategy, searches were related to managing depression. The key words used were: "managing depression," "chronic disease," and "older adults."
- ❖ Further searches were based on finding articles on treating depression. The key words used - in various combinations - during these searches were: "social engagement," "depression treatment," "recreation," "depression," "preventing loneliness," and "technology."
- ❖ As more information was gathered from previous articles, more specific searches were made. The keywords included: "exercise programs for older adults with disabilities," "self-help," "internet learning," "depression," "older adults," and "yoga."
- ❖ In the beginning, the general search retrieved 3702 articles. Only a few articles were read to learn about the relationship between older adults and depression, and to develop more specific search criteria.
- ❖ Over time, more specific searches yielded 5-30 articles on average per search.
- ❖ The articles were excluded on the basis of their methodological rigour.
- ❖ Articles included in the review were from various countries around the world: France, Israel, Korea, Taiwan, etc.

Results

Themes	Key Findings	Citations
Grey Literature Search		
Early Signs and Symptoms of Depression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Feelings of helplessness and hopelessness ❖ Lack of interest in daily activities, hobbies, socializing ❖ Appetite or significant weight change by 5% of body weight ❖ Insomnia, waking up early in the morning or oversleeping ❖ Feeling agitated, irritable, anxious, violent, angry ❖ Tired, lack of energy, physically drained ❖ Feeling worthless, self-loathing, harsh on yourself ❖ Substance abuse, compulsive gambling, and other reckless behaviour as an escape route ❖ Unable to focus, make decisions, or remember things ❖ More sensitivity to pain and aches ❖ Depression is a major risk for suicide if left untreated 	Robinson, L., Smith, M., & Segal, J. (2015, August). Depression in Older Adults and the Elderly. <i>Help Guide</i> . Retrieved from http://www.helpguide.org/articles/depression/depression-in-older-adults-and-the-elderly.htm ; Smith, M., Saisan, J., & Segal, J. (2015, August). Depression Symptoms and Warning Signs. <i>Help Guide</i> . Retrieved from http://www.helpguide.org/articles/depression/depression-signs-and-symptoms.htm
Scholarly Research		
Healthy Diet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Good nutrition intake helps to prevent and reduce depression ❖ Healthy diet helps to repair neuronal injuries 	Woo et al., 2006
Cognitive and Psychological Coping using Computer and Internet (Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Self-monitoring exercises of Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and participating in CBT through the use of internet at home can be a great way to treat and prevent depression ❖ It can be used to build optimism by continuously monitoring thoughts ❖ Older adults can learn to modify the internal dialogue to a more positive one ❖ Guided imagery through the use of computer or videos helps change the thought process ❖ Continuously monitoring the changes and make a mood diary to record thoughts to find the patterns and figure out what brings negative thoughts ❖ More frequent visits to a specialist for support ❖ Manage Stress by scheduling activities, following through with them ❖ Use laughter and humour to lighten up your mood 	Choi, 2009; Yoon, Choi, Kim, & Lee et al., 2015; Crabb, Cavanagh, Proudfoot, Learmonth, Raffie, & Weigardt, 2012; Gonzalez-Palau et al., 2014; Howell, 2004
Socializing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Communicate to deal with issues that may be bothering you ❖ Social support from family, friends, and neighbours can help improve depressive symptoms ❖ It is important to talk to the close ones- spouse, children, friends to share feelings ❖ Attend support groups ❖ Talk to family and friends often, use phone or the internet to video chat ❖ Older adults can join social programs in their community, building (condominiums/apartment/long-term care centers) for support and making new friends 	Cattan, White, Bond, & Learmonth, 2005; Choi, 2009; Howell, 2004; Yoon et al., 2015
Regular Exercise and Sleep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Progressive muscle relaxation training helps relax ❖ Exercising (resistance or aerobic) has positive effects on cognition, mood, flexibility, mobility and helps maintain healthy weight ❖ Sleep disturbances can cause irritability, anxiety, lethargy, which can lead to depression in the long run. Therefore, it is important to get enough sleep, and exercising improves sleep quality ❖ Walking at moderate intensity for 40 minutes, three times a week helps prevent depression ❖ Being always homebound increases the prevalence of depression, anxiety, and cognitive impairment in older adults ❖ Performing yoga for 70 minutes over the period of six months is showed to improve sleep quality, and maintain a deeper level of sleep. ❖ Performing yoga also helps become more relaxed and connect with yourself both mentally and physically. It helps sharpen the mind and strengthen the body 	Bernard et al., 2015; Chen et al., 2009; Chen, Huang, Cheng, Li, & Chang, 2015; Choi, 2009; Napoli et al., 2014
Learning new skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Education is a great coping mechanism to fight depression ❖ Learning new skills helps increase self-worth, mentally stimulating, and a great way to creatively express yourself ❖ Learning gives a sense of accomplishment, acquire valuable skills that can be used in everyday life by older adults ❖ As well as, attending workshops and working with other people is a great way to make new friends and socialize ❖ Learning new skills and socializing helps increase self-esteem in the long-run and reduce depression 	Excolar Chua & De Guzman, 2014
Increased use of computer and Internet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Using the Internet provides older adults, especially the ones with disabilities, the freedom to connect with close ones through video chatting and other social platforms. ❖ Older adults can read news and feel connected to the world, and they can participate in political activism ❖ They can shop online, bank online, learn new things, play games, movies, and listen to music online for entertainment ❖ Older adults may face challenges when using technology, but it is not something that they cannot overcome with proper training in advance 	Shapira, Barak, & Gai, 2007

Promising Interventions and Resources Available

Promising Self-Care Interventions

- ❖ Learning to monitor thoughts and internal dialogue, being more optimistic, and asking for support from professionals when needed is important to manage and prevent depression.
- ❖ Living alone can result in loneliness and poor mental health, which may result in depression. Therefore, joining social programs in the community, especially the ones that have learning aspects, such as cooking classes are a good way to make new friends and socialize.
- ❖ Older adults can perform yoga, walk, and exercise – modified based on their abilities – in order to stay active. Exercising and yoga have been shown to help improve the quality of sleep, which reduces irritability, anxiousness, and gives more time to perform daytime activities and socialize.
- ❖ Older adults can learn new skills (e.g. using email, playing an instrument, and etc.) to help express themselves. It provides a sense of accomplishment and increase their self-worth, which is beneficial in preventing and managing depression.
- ❖ Computers and the internet are great resources, especially for older adults that may be homebound due to disabilities. Technologies can help to connect with friends and loved ones, the world, and can be used to learn new things and for entertainment.

Community-Based Resources

- ❖ In Peterborough, there are three Seniors Recreation Centres that provide a wide variety of social activities such as playing card games, painting, wood carving, dancing, and so forth.
- ❖ Peterborough Community Care Access Centre can help older adults access and recommend services matched to individual needs
- ❖ Geriatric Assessment and Intervention Network (GAIN clinic) is another service that performs can complete a geriatric assessment and make recommendations to help older adults live safely and independently in their homes.
- ❖ There are other various health, support, and transportation services available to older adults. More information can be obtained by calling Peterborough City Hall at 705-742-7777 x0