

Using an Ecological Approach to Understanding the Barriers and Facilitators to Physical Activity Promotion among Seniors in Rural and Urban Contexts in Alberta



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Background

- Physical activity (PA) is associated with the prevention and treatment of a wide range of physical and psychological disorders (Dishman et al., 2004).
- Older adults (Loitz, Berry & Spence, 2009) and people living in rural areas (O’Kane, Craig, Black & Thorpe, 2008; Walker, Pullen, Boeckner, et al., 2009) are at greater risk of physical inactivity.
- Understanding the barriers to participation for these population is critical to the development and planning of interventions designed to increase PA.
- An ecological approach (Sallis et al., 2006) highlights interactions between intrapersonal (individual), interpersonal (social), community & environmental and organizational levels of influence for PA.

Results

- Facilitators to PA among all participants were most commonly associated with the interpersonal or social levels.
- Barriers to PA were most often associated with the individual level, community and physical environment and policy level of the ecological model for all participants.
- Adults from rural areas referred most frequently to community and physical environment barriers.

Barriers and facilitators for all older adults:

In the winter, if you get a sleet storm or something and the roads and sidewalks are icy as heck, you’re not going to go out walking. Even driving could get hazardous type of thing so – you’re not going to drive

There’s also a social aspect, especially when you’re dealing with the group activities... get away from talking to the four walls and...a dog or a cat that won’t listen to you anyway.



I earned the right to do nothing.

I walk every day for an hour at least, I have a chocolate lab dog that keeps me very honest.

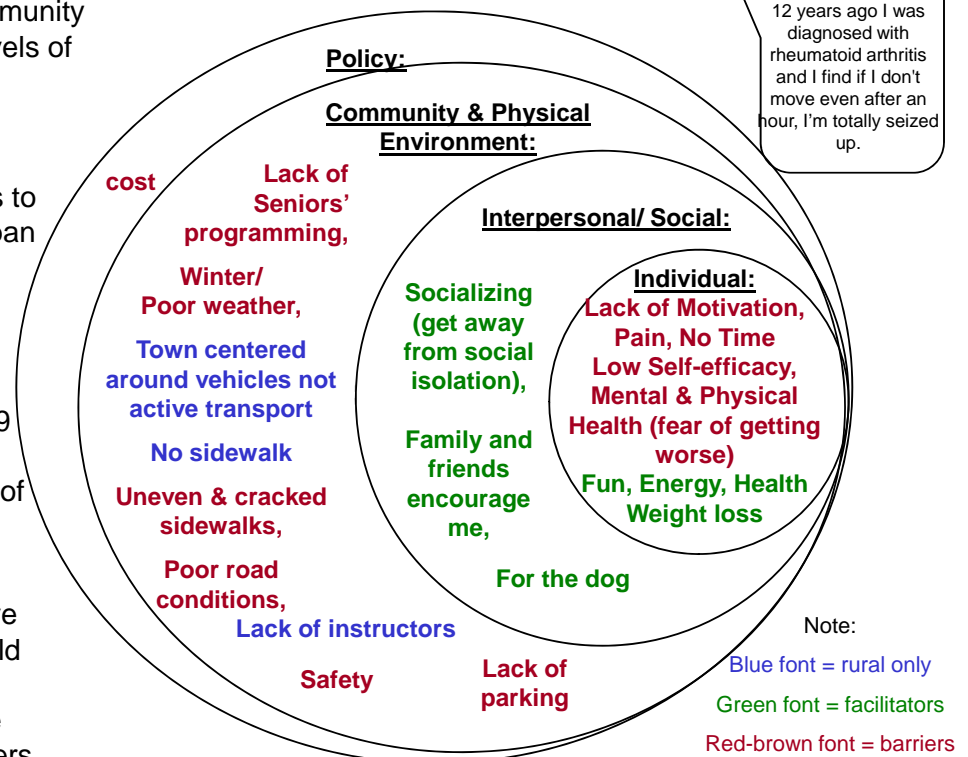
My passion is movement because 12 years ago I was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis and I find if I don’t move even after an hour, I’m totally seized up.

Purpose

- To explore the barriers and facilitators to PA among older adults in rural and urban settings using an ecological approach (Sallis et al., 2006).

Methods

- Twenty-one older adults, mean age 69 years, from three communities (urban, semi-urban, and rural) took part in one of the three focus groups.
- Participants were asked about their barriers and facilitators to PA (e.g. active transport, leisure-time PA and household PA). After the open-ended questioning, participants were asked to consider the ecological model and identify any barriers and facilitators not previously reported.
- Focus group interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed systematically to identify recurring themes. Barriers and facilitators to PA were conceptualized according to Sallis’s *et al* (2006) ecological approach.



Implications

- The ecological model was useful in exploring the facilitators and barriers to PA for older adults.
- The data highlight the salience of the ecological model in planning and tailoring interventions for older adults when considering the size of the community.