



Initiation and Maintenance of Participation in a Local Mall Walking Program

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Background

- Malls provide a “safe, accessible, and affordable exercise environment for middle-aged and older adults” (Farren et al., 2015).
- Despite the availability of mall walking programs, barriers to mall walking include lack of transportation, illness and symptoms, and lack of appropriate footwear (Farren, Belza et al., 2015)

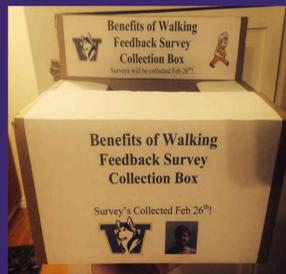
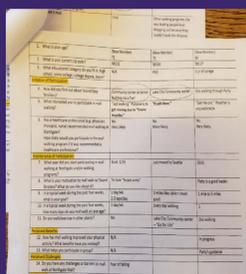
Purpose

- To better understand mall walkers’ reasons for initiating and maintaining walking in a local mall walking program.



Methods

- This quality improvement project included mall walking club members and residents or a retirement community.
- Presentation to residents of a retirement community who after the presentation completed surveys about benefits of walking.
- One-on-one interviews conducted during 5 Saturdays from February to March 2016 with a local mall walking club.



Results

Mall Walking Club Members Interviewed: 10

- Age: 71-90 years old
- Sex: M (2) and F (8)
- Level of Education: 80% have a college degree or higher

Feedback from 15 attendees of a mall walking presentation at Aljoja Thornton Place



Major Themes

- Most prevalent reasons for initiating and maintaining mall walking participation were:
 - Socialization
 - Health Improvement
 - Health Maintenance

Initiation	Challenges
“It’s nice that the mall is close by.”	“Walking on hard surfaces is hard because of my arthritis.”
“I like the mental health benefits of walking.”	“How much should I walk with atrial fibrillation?”
“Value of exercise”	“I can’t go mall walking on Saturday mornings.”

Maintenance	Challenges
“Sense of community”	“...fear of falling”
“Use it or lose it.”	“I wish we could carpool or have a better way to get here.”
“Patty makes a difference.”	“...pain, shortness of breath, and other symptoms associated with chronic conditions”
“I can walk anywhere, but walking with friends makes a difference.”	

Discussion

- Mall walkers recognized the benefits of mall walking and the importance of the involvement of healthcare providers (HCPs), such as physical therapists, to make the most of their walking experience
- Majority of mall walkers reported having chronic pain or conditions that hinder participation. Involvement of HCPs in information dissemination and health promotion could be vital to initiation and maintaining participation.
- A limitation of the project was that the population interviewed/surveyed may not be representative of individuals who are unable to participate or maintain participation due to personal barriers (finances, access to transportation etc.)

Conclusion

- Mall walking has socialization and health benefits and plays a role in both maintaining and initiating mall walking.
- Future studies may benefit from targeting mall walking engagement efforts toward recruiting and maintaining participation among lower income communities. Mall walking is free and a potentially a great resource for those who have limited alternatives for physical activity.
- Community health care providers can promote wellness by referring those who may benefit to mall walking programs.



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Malls provide flat walking surfaces and seating



Public transportation to and from malls



Malls are a safe place to walk

