Editorial

Activities of daily living

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Ellen Glickman
Kent State University, USA

Correspondence: Ellen Glickman, Professor and Coordinator Exercise Physiology, Kent State University, Exercise Science Laboratory, 350 Midway Drive, 162 Gym Annex Kent, Ohio 44242-0001, USA, Tel 216-401 2332, Email EGLICKMA@kent.edu

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The ability to perform activities of daily living (ADL's) and maintain independence requires strong skeletal muscles, balance, flexibility and cardiovascular and musculoskeletal endurance. Regular physical activity or exercise (planned with a purpose) helps to attenuate or even improve the age related decline in muscle strength, bone mass, flexibility, balance, musculoskeletal endurance and risks of falling in general. Because balance plays an important role in everyday activities such as walking, getting up from a commode, picking up a child, or even picking up groceries, balance problems can greatly reduce quality of life and activities of daily living. Since exercise has been shown to be able to improve balance and the risk of falling, exercise programs should implement exercises that focus on balance and stretching in the older adult. Physical exercise, or the lack of exercise, became an independent risk factor for cardiovascular disease in 2010 (American College of Sports Medicine). And in 1996, the Surgeon General said that Physical Activity should be engaged in for at least 30 minutes on 5 or more days a week for a total of at least 1000 calories per week. The research from our laboratory explored "sway scores" (a marker of balance) to investigate whether sway scores improved after consistent participation in our faculty/staff exercise program. The individuals (age 28-65 yrs.) engaged in regular supervised exercise sessions and their movement monitored via an accelerometer to quantify their energy expenditure and activity level. The results were consistent with previous research in this area and demonstrated that physical exercise improved balance in adults. The participants that moved more had greater improvements in their sway scores. In addition, the older adults showed a greater improvement in the sway scores compared to the younger adults. This also supports the necessity for physical activity and balance training specifically in the older adult to prevent age -related losses and potential reductions in their ability to perform ADL. This data and results once again demonstrate that exercise is beneficial for all adults, but is especially important for older adults.