

Understanding the experiences of rural community-dwelling older adults in using a new DVD-delivered Otago Exercise Programme

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Background

- Arthritis is known to increase the risk of injurious falls.
- The home-based Otago Exercise Programme (OEP) has been shown to reduce the occurrence of falls in community-dwelling seniors.
- We recently developed a new OEP DVD that was designed to be delivered with minimal coaching by a physiotherapist (PT), for people living in rural communities.

Purpose

- 1) Understand older adults' experiences in using the DVD-delivered OEP.
- 2) Explore barriers and facilitators to implementing the DVD-delivered OEP from the participants' perspectives.

Methods

- 32 rural community-dwelling older adults (≥75 years old) who participated in a 6-month DVD-delivered OEP study were invited to participate in this qualitative study.
- 2 small group interviews were initially conducted to explore the breadth of participants' experiences with the program.
- These were followed by semi-structured individual interviews to gain an in-depth understanding of these experiences.
- An inductive constant comparison analysis involving coding of transcripts was performed.
- Methodological rigour was ensured through field note taking, journaling and maintaining an audit trail.
- Peer-review was performed to detect issues in the analysis such as overemphasized or underemphasized points, vague descriptions, and assumptions made by the primary researcher.



Figure 1. Examples of exercises from the Otago Exercise Programme.

Results

Participant characteristics	Group interviews (N=5)	Individual interviews (N=16)
Average age	79 years	82 years
Number of women (%)	5 (100%)	10 (62.5%)
At least some university education (%)	3 (60%)	5 (31.3%)
Face-to-face interview (%)	5 (100%)	3 (18.8%)
Telephone interview (%)	0 (0%)	13 (81.3%)

Three themes emerged:

Theme 1: 'The OEP DVD: Useful training tool but in need of more pep', reflected participants' experiences that the DVD provided important guidance at program onset, but was too slow and low-energy for longer-term use.

"...you weren't tied down to -- and you didn't have to be, say, Monday, Wednesday, Friday. You could be Monday, Tuesday, and Friday you know, whatever. That was a good aspect of [the program] because you didn't -- it wasn't tied down to any particular day..."
(Thomas, 84 y/o)

"Setting aside the time [made it difficult to use the program]... 'Cause I may be retired, but I've still got a lot of stuff to do."
(Walter, 79 y/o)

Theme 3: 'Social creatures: Wanting greater human connection during exercise', described how some participants desired further social interactions for enhancing motivation and sense of guidance.

"...I thought [the DVD] was wonderful the way it started and the descriptions that it gave and the purpose...and when the [model] demonstrated how to do it correctly, which I think is very important... But in the video you had to watch it every time. Well any intelligent person, after doing it five, six, ten times, you want to just do the exercise... There was too much description so after a while I would just fast forward, fast forward, and then after that I... just went to the [manual] if I had any problem."
(Anne, 74 y/o, group interview #1)

Theme 2: 'Providing greater control over one's exercise regimen, but sometimes life gets in the way of staying active', described participants' appreciation of the program's flexibility, but personal health concerns and everyday lives imposed challenges for adhering to the program.

"...I think there is a strong need for older people to keep social contacts so I don't know whether it may be [beneficial to have] an optional joining together of people to do [the program] initially. It would be a little more people-oriented in other words. You're not looking at a video, you're not having to motivate yourself to get up off the chair and do it. But you have a commitment to meet with some people and I mean that's what gets me out to walk..."
(Edna, 77 y/o, group interview #2)

Implications

- Participants should be encouraged to refer to sections of the manual or DVD as needed (i.e., tailoring the program), and engage friends and family in exercises.
- Future iterations of the DVD should be livelier and future iterations of the manual should provide examples of integrating OEP into everyday activities.

