

SNIPPET

Dance for your health

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Key words

Dance • Health • Chronic disease

In the primitive societies dancing was as essential as eating or sleeping. Dancing was the mode of individual and group expression, and communication with others or even with the nature. The major changes over the history were accompanied with changes in the dancing rituals of every society [1].

According to Keogh and collaborators (2009) dancing is a mode of physical activity that may allow people to improve their physical function, health, and well-being [2]. Recent study in Greece evaluated the effect of a traditional dance training program on aerobic capacity and muscle strength of adults with hearing loss. The results of this intervention study, following 12-week training program, showed significant improvements in peak physiological parameters for peak minute ventilation, peak oxygen consumption (both absolute and relative), time to exhaustion, and peak torque values between the 2 measurements (initial and final). The authors concluded that adults with hearing loss can improve their physical fitness levels with the application of a systematic and well-designed traditional dance training program [3].

In the USA, a pilot study was conducted to test a dance intervention and explore the role of peer support to improve the diabetes outcomes of A1C, weight, body fat, and blood pressure in African American women with type 2 diabetes. A total of 46 women, 26 to 83 years of age, were randomized to either the 12-week dance group or usual care group. Dancing showed to be beneficial to lower the systolic blood pressure and body fat together with significant reductions in all the diabetes outcomes including A1C [4].

Parkinson's disease (PD) is the second most frequent neurodegenerative disease for the time being. Recent study

compared the effects of partnered and non-partnered tango dance on balance and mobility in patients with mild-moderate PD (Hoehn and Yahr stages I-III). Balance and gait were evaluated in the weeks immediately before, immediately after, and 1 month after the intervention. Both groups significantly improved on the Berg Balance Scale, comfortable and fast-as-possible walking velocity, and cadence. Improvements were maintained at the 1-month follow-up, with no significant differences between partnered and non-partnered groups [5]. Another study by the same authors investigated social dance's feasibility and effects on mood, functional mobility, and balance confidence in patients with Severe Mental Illness. Participants danced once per week in 1-hour lessons for 10 weeks. All participants reported enjoying classes, and interest to continue. Also improvements in anxiety, depression, and balance confidence were demonstrated, without significant differences. The only significant improvement was the Timed Up and Go [6].

A recent Cochrane Systematic Review investigated the effects of dance therapy for people with schizophrenia or schizophrenia-like illnesses compared with standard care and other interventions. Only one blind study was included according to the inclusion and quality criteria. The results of the study showed non significant improvement, and recommended future work to increase high quality evidence in dance therapy for patients with schizophrenia [7].

In conclusion, dance, besides being fun, seems to have important benefits for mental and physical health. Further intervention studies with sufficient sample size are strongly needed, especially for treating mental and cognitive diseases.

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