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A Social Dance Intervention To Improve Health In Older African Americans Living In Community Settings

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Introduction:

Older low-income African Americans are at high risk for health problems such as falls, hypertension, stress, and depression, partly due to limited physical activity. They are likely to drop out of exercise programs or avoid them altogether for reasons such as lack of interest and transportation. Social dance intervention offers solutions to health problems to interested individuals seeking an alternative exercise program. Small instances of aerobic exercise from social dance can help address some health problems, specifically mobility, balance, sleep, and gait patterns. The endorphins released from the exercise in conjunction with the social interaction will combat the residents' depression and social isolation experiences.



Proposed Methods:

- Our research team will work with senior residents of a low-income public housing building.
- 5-7 residents will volunteer for the study and then be assessed by the occupational therapist to determine if the intervention is safe for them.
- The research team will conduct surveys to assess residents' physical/mental health status and history.
- The intervention will take place two times a week, each session lasting forty-five minutes, over three weeks.
- There will be a focus group with the participants occurring before the intervention and after it ends to get more insight into how the participants felt throughout the experience.
- The data gathered in the focus groups will be analyzed to determine how the participants' health and physical activity will change over the three weeks.

Proposed Results:

The research team hopes to find that the health of the subjects will improve after the intervention as well as their attitudes about their health. This can be tracked through the surveys that are taken before and after the intervention, and the responses given in the focus groups. The research team also hopes to see a new sense of community with the residents in this new group activity that can continue outside of the intervention. A possible limitation could be residents dropping out during the intervention, but we hope to prevent this by having the program onsite for the residents so it is easily accessible. Using social dance, we hope to create a long-term relationship with the residents and sustained exercise and social interaction.

Focus Group Questions:

- What types of exercise have you participated in in the past? How were they made available to you?
- Do you currently partake in any forms of exercise? What kind(s) and how often?
- Do you have a community of people you can rely on for healthy habits?
- How did dancing make you feel?
- Would you continue using dance as a form of exercise in the future?

Hypothesis:

It is hypothesized that there will be improvement in participant health and attitudes toward dance as a physical activity.

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