
POSTER ABSTRACT

Depression and contribution of active ageing groups in its reduction

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Introduction: This research focuses on a region in NE Bosnia and Herzegovina (BIH) with around 300'000 residents, and looks at the effects of established active ageing (AA) groups which are engaged in promoting social engagement and mutual community support on depression.

Theory/methods: Since 2013, the Swiss Red Cross (SRC) in BIH, has through project interventions, supported the establishment of elderly AA groups. Older people are actively involved in community development and provide care for peers in need.

In cooperation with the Tuzla Canton Institute of Health, a cross-sectional survey was conducted in 2017 and then in 2018, based on the BDI-II questionnaire[1], with the participation of an intervention group[2] and a comparison group[3]. The aim of the activity was to evaluate the impact of the organized AA group activities on the mental and physical health of elderly persons in relation to the comparison group whose respondents were not involved in any social activity.

Results: Respondents were persons over 60 years old, residing in both rural and urban settings. 300 people participated in 2017 and 600 people in 2018 (intervention and comparison group).

In 2017, 3% of respondents in the intervention groups avoid socializing more than usual, while in the comparison group it is 18%. Scientifically observing, 0% of the intervention group members have suicidal intentions, in the comparison group it is 14%.

Collected data indicates significant differences between older people who are socially active and participate in inclusive group activities and those who are not. According to the 2018 results 27,85% respondents from comparison group stated that they willfully avoid company, while members of intervention groups responded positively in only 3,7% cases.

Overall comparative calculations reveal that only 6,33% AA group members indicated signs of depression, while in the comparison group it was 33,22%.

Discussion: Collected information opens the possibility to justify the appeals for allocation of resources needed to support the work and contribution of the elderly and to initiate awareness-raising campaigns about the various mental benefits of the inclusion in community groups.

conclusion: The premise that established group activities can influence the reduction of depression, among the target population is tangible. The SRC project's initiative of establishing AA community groups brings positive change to people and communities.

Lessons learned: In societies such as that of BIH, younger generations are fleeing the country and older people are left to their own devices. Coping with poverty and exclusion becomes a fact of life.

The establishment of AA community groups has multiple health benefits[4], increasing physical activity, contributing to the feeling of connectedness and belonging.

Limitations: The survey shortages refer to limited population coverage and the willingness of respondents to speak of this taboo. Therefore this survey limits itself to the volunteer self-assessment.

Suggestion for future research: Social research to be continued in order to endorse current findings.

Keywords: depression; exclusion; social engagement; community support; health benefits
