

REDEFINING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY POST-COVID-19 TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF THE ELDERLY

Sarah Dias Ribeiro¹
Lays Alves Batista²
Lauane Cardoso Silva³
Yara Rabelo Campos Lopes⁴
Renata Sousa Nunes⁵

ABSTRACT

This post-COVID-19 analysis demonstrates strategies to improve the quality of life of older adults, defined as citizens aged 60 years or older. The impacts of the pandemic on health and well-being are highlighted, emphasizing forms of prevention and rehabilitation. Guidelines for safe physical activity are recommended, considering the necessary precautions. Different techniques used for health recovery in the post-pandemic period are emphasized, highlighting the importance of integrating physical therapy into adapted exercise programs. These approaches are essential to meet the needs and limitations of older adults, thus promoting healthy aging. The analysis highlights the importance of continuous and personalized monitoring to ensure the effectiveness of the proposed interventions, ensuring that older adults can maintain an adequate level of physical activity, even in the face of restrictions imposed by the pandemic. The overall objective is to use scientific evidence to prove the benefits of physical activity in improving function, balance, mobility, and reducing the risk of falls for older adults. This research is a qualitative literature review, characterized by the collection of academic articles. The collection was carried out at the Ministry of Health through the Virtual Health Library (BVS), Google Scholar, Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO), and *Periódico Capes* (Capes Journals Portal).

Keywords: Physical activity; Quality of life of the elderly; Post-COVID-19.

INTRODUCTION

The pandemic caused by Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) has affected thousands of people and resulted in many deaths. Among those who have recovered, many were left with sequelae associated with the disease. Studies show that the implications go beyond respiratory system impairment, affecting the body more globally, including neurological, gastrointestinal, and musculoskeletal disorders (Nicola *et al.*, 2020).

Silva and Sousa (2020) state that the most serious complications left by the disease are seen in patients who required hospitalization in intensive care units (ICUs), as prolonged ICU stays negatively affect their quality of life. Muscle alterations after COVID-19 result from an imbalance between protein synthesis and breakdown and are

¹ Student, Evangelical University of Goiás – Ceres Campus, Email: sarahribeiro985@gmail.com

² Student, Evangelical University of Goiás – Ceres Campus, Email: laysalves2010@hotmail.com

³ Student, Evangelical University of Goiás – Ceres Campus, Email: lauanecardoso12@gmail.com

⁴ Student, Evangelical University of Goiás – Ceres Campus, Email: yaracampos22@hotmail.com

⁵ Master's Degree, Evangelical University of Goiás – Ceres Campus, Email: renatafisio8@hotmail.com

Physical therapy aims to prevent and alleviate post-COVID-19 sequelae by addressing musculoskeletal, neurological, vascular, and respiratory impairments, restoring lung function compromised by reduced cardiorespiratory capacity (Martinez et al., 2020).

Physiotherapy also plays an important role in elderly health, being fundamental for promoting recovery and rehabilitation. Physiotherapists work to strengthen muscles, improve respiratory capacity, and prevent complications such as respiratory and musculoskeletal sequelae. In addition, physiotherapists help older adults resume daily activities and promote their physical and mental well-being.

The analysis of scientific studies on physical activity in older adults and physiotherapy in post-COVID-19 patients aims to highlight the importance of exercise in promoting health and functional rehabilitation. The goal is to improve the quality of life of older adults in the post-pandemic context.

METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative literature review, based on the collection and analysis of articles. Data collection was carried out at the Ministry of Health through the Virtual Health Library (BVS), Google Scholar, Scientific Electronic Library Online (Scielo), and *Periódico Capes* (Capes Journals Portal) on March 12, 2024, and March 19, 2024, using the following keywords: quality of life of the elderly, physical activity, and post-COVID-19.

Article selection was performed by screening titles and analyzing the available full texts. In order to restrict the analysis of the articles according to their relevance to the discussion of the topic, inclusion and exclusion criteria were established for the research, which are shown in Table 1.

1 Table. Inclusion and exclusion criteria for the study selection.

| Inclusion criteria | Exclusion Criteria |
|---|---|
| Articles published between 2020 and 2024. | Paid-access articles. |
| Publications in Portuguese or English. | Material not aligned with the overall objective of this review. |
| Articles addressing the topic proposed in the research. | Incomplete texts. |

It is believed that the analysis of these studies will result in an expansion of knowledge for society, especially regarding the quality of life of older adults in the post-COVID-19 period and the improvement in functional capacity achieved through physical exercise. Furthermore, this research also provides a foundation for future studies on the subject.

RESULTS

A bibliographic review on the quality of life of older adults after COVID-19 was developed, with a focus on physiotherapy. This material serves as a resource for health professionals and students, in addition to providing educational information to the population. It highlights the importance of maintaining an active lifestyle in older age, evidencing the benefits of physical activity that go beyond simple movement.

The bibliographic review emphasizes that, during the pandemic, many older adults faced social isolation and a reduction in physical activity. After the pandemic, it is crucial that older adults resume physical activity in a safe and adapted manner, according to their conditions, always under the guidance of a health professional. Physical therapy plays a vital role in promoting adequate physical activity for older adults.

Being physically active as an older adult has several benefits, such as improved mobility, balance, and muscle strength, reducing the risk of falls and promoting functional independence. In addition, physical activity contributes significantly to physical and emotional well-being, resulting in a better post-COVID-19 prognosis.

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of physical activity in the quality of life of older adults, revealing the need for a holistic approach to rehabilitation after functional compromise. In addition to physical recovery, rehabilitation should restore functionality, improve mental health, and promote independence. Physical therapists play a crucial role in planning and implementing personalized exercise programs, promoting adapted physical activities and ensuring that older adults can maintain a healthy and active lifestyle after the pandemic.

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