

Health literacy and active ageing among the population 65+ in the South Bohemian Region in the Czech Republic

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Introduction

Czechia is still experiencing an ageing population trend. The medium variant of the 2023 Projection (CZSO, 2023) suggests that by the end of the 2050s, the proportion of elderly (i.e. people aged 65 and over) should reach three and a quarter million people. However, this projection does not provide information about the quality of life of these people, which is mainly dependent on their health status. The ageing process is associated with losing the body's functional reserves and, therefore, with an increased susceptibility to several diseases, is generally well known. The results of the European Health Survey from 2019 indicate that 75% of people aged 65 and over suffered from a long-term illness or health problem. Age increases the percentage of people who experienced an illness or health problem logically (ÚZIS, CZSO, 2019). Practice suggests that health, health potential, and self-sufficiency are essential for quality of life. Therefore, it is necessary to actively focus on mapping the level of health literacy of this population group and supporting healthy old age and ageing with an emphasis on intergenerational dialogue and coexistence (Barger, Kociánová, eds., 2023).

Objective

The paper aims to outline the problematic health literacy of the Czech population aged 65+ in the context of active ageing.

Methodology

The presented data are based on a qualitative research survey conducted using semi-structured interviews. Informants were selected using snowball method. The research population consisted of residents of the South Bohemian Region aged 65 and over, who were oriented to place, time, and person and agreed to conduct a semi-structured interview. The size of the sample

contained a total of 30 informants who were determined by the criterion of theoretical saturation. Individual interviews were transcribed verbatim into MS word and analysed using open, axial, and selective coding.

Results

Health is an important attribute for the target group and is necessary for healthy ageing. To maintain health, a certain level of health literacy is necessary, which must be constantly developed. Healthy ageing is associated primarily with self-sufficiency, the possibility of an active life and an active way of spending free time. Increasing age is a factor that is closely linked to the increasing incidence of diseases (including pain). As a result, this significantly affects the perspective of healthy ageing. In the context of increasing health literacy, communication is an important factor, which has its own specifics in old age. Based on the analysis of the interviews, problematic areas of health literacy in the target group were further identified, which impact active ageing and the quality of life of these people. These areas are: stroke; prevention of obesity; care of the lower extremities; prevention of cardiovascular diseases; prevention of cancer; prevention of stress and mental hygiene; balance exercises – 10 minutes a day to strengthen fitness and health; walking – a natural and important part of our lives; movement in water – swimming and other activities; cycling – an excellent choice for our health; sports games – recreation for body and soul; active old age and aging; the importance of preventive examinations in the context of health care.

Conclusion

It turns out that despite the nationwide educational activities implemented so far, there are areas of health literacy among the target group that are problematic. For planning future educational activities, it seems essential to examine the level of knowledge in this area and the preferences and regional peculiarities that could affect the implementation of interventions.

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