

Reducing healthcare costs by increasing physical activity in elderly population

MD Antonello Valerio Caserta¹, MD Oriana Amata¹, MD Rossella Costantino¹, MD Lorenzo Panella¹

¹Department of Rehabilitation G.PINI-CTO Hospital, Milan, Italy

Introduction Regular physical activity reduces mortality and cognitive impairment in elderly people. The number and proportion of elderly persons is increasing, in Italy, as well as the world. Disability is an important indicator to measure disease burden in this group. Adaptive Physical Activity (APA) is a community-based exercise program for participants with chronic disease and disabilities.

Purpose The aim of this project is to study how APA improves function and quality of life in the elderly community.

Method 108 subjects aged 60 years or above were included in the APA program. The APA program is a group exercise including walking, strength, and balance training for 1 hour, twice a week, in local gyms, supervised by gym instructors. We study the variation of outcome measures after 6 months of training. In particular we used following outcomes: the Short Physical Performance Battery (SPPB), the Barthel Index, Psychological General Well-Being Index (PGWBI), the Cumulative Illness Rating Scale (CIRS) and the Visual Analogue Scale (VAS).

Results Treatment subjects, when compared with control subjects, demonstrated improvements at 6 months. APA program reduced healthcare access improving the quality of life of persons enrolled. Infact they had fewer hospitalizations and days in the hospital.

Conclusions The APA seems a safe, feasible, and efficacious program in community setting. Our results suggest that increasing participation in regular moderate physical activity can reduce annual national medical costs.