

Danser vers la santé

Summary

- Community-based exercise programs can engage seniors in physical activity, which can lead to better physical fitness and less cognitive decline as they age.
- *Danser vers la santé* (Dance your way to health) aimed to expand the existing *Grouille ou rouille* (Move it or lose it) program – a long-standing fitness group for seniors in New Brunswick – by offering supplemental virtual fitness classes that were tailored to seniors' needs and were available through a web-based application.
 - Established in 1981, *Grouille ou rouille* fitness instructors have travelled the province to provide weekly fitness classes to seniors at local community centres.
- The project evaluated participants' overall program satisfaction as well as their physical and cognitive health before and after the 14-week program. **Due to underutilization of the virtual *Danser vers la santé* app, only the existing *Grouille ou rouille* program could be evaluated.**
- 112 seniors (102 women, 10 men) participated in the evaluation. 81.3% of the sample identified as Francophone women.

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| HSPF Focus Area | Increase Independence, improve quality of life, and promoting healthy lifestyles |
| Project Start & End Date | May 1, 2020 to June 30, 2023 |
| Organization/Agency | Université de Moncton |
| Location | Southeast New Brunswick |
| Principal Investigator(s) | Grant Handrigan |

Indicator Impact / Outcome / Result

Given that there was insufficient data to appropriately evaluate this project, outcomes should be interpreted with caution when used to make decisions.

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| Physical Fitness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Grouille ou rouille</i> participants <u>improved</u> their muscle strength and muscular endurance in the upper body, but there was <u>no change</u> in the lower body. • Participants' waist circumference <u>decreased</u> ($p < .01$), which means that their body composition improved. However, there was <u>no change</u> in participants' weight ($p = .09$) • <u>No change</u> was found in participants' cardiorespiratory endurance or flexibility. |
| Cognitive Health | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the end of the <i>Grouille ou rouille</i> program, participants showed significant improvement in the double-task walking measure ($p = .02$), which indicates <u>improved cognitive health</u>. • Based on a measure of double-task walking ($n = 96$), only 5 participants scored in the <u>at-risk range</u> for mild cognitive impairment before the program. In depth statistical analyses were not performed due to the small sample size. • Anecdotally, participants seemed reluctant to take cognitive tests and associated these tasks with feelings of anxiety. |
| Quality of Life | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While participants <u>increased</u> their physical activity levels over the course of the <i>Grouille ou rouille</i> program, there were <u>no changes</u> observed in other quality of life indicators. |

Methods and Comparison

Quantitative methods were used to assess changes in participants' physical fitness, cognitive health, quality of life, perceived barriers to accessing community exercise programs, and program satisfaction. Surveys and physical measures were collected before and after the 14-week *Grouille ou rouille* program. However, the virtual *Danser vers la santé* app was underutilized, and therefore, the virtual program was not evaluated.

Conclusions and Lessons Learned

- The project's primary objective was to supplement the existing *Grouille ou rouille* program with the virtual *Danser vers la santé* program. However, participants did not use the virtual program, indicating preference for in-person fitness classes.
- Some participants refused to take part in the physical and cognitive health measures as they were unfamiliar and/or anxiety-inducing.
- The project team emphasized the importance of integrating participants' perspectives into project design and program development to generate meaningful outputs.
- Low representation from males (8.9% of sample) might be explained by participants' conversational anecdotes: certain exercises, such as dancing, may not be of interest to men.

Recommendations

- Future studies should incorporate an information session about cognitive and physical assessments to relieve apprehension from seniors and increase their participation.
- Based on the study outcomes, the *Grouille ou rouille* program could be modified to promote aerobic fitness and should place greater emphasis on flexibility and lower limb strengthening.
- Working with community partners is recommended to facilitate participant recruitment.
- Supporting existing programs can have greater impact than developing new programs.

Next Steps

- The program *Grouille ou rouille* is currently operated independently by KinFit50+ Inc.
- There are no plans to expand *Danser vers la santé*.

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