Optimising person-centred health promotion for older adults: understanding their perspectives on healthy living

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Introduction

Aging population → decreased functional capacity and greater dependency on health and social agencies.

Adopting healthy lifestyle → postpone morbidity and improve functioning

This study explores the perspectives and views of older adults on healthy living, and their interactions with health professionals regarding healthy living.

This perspective is necessary for health professionals when they engage in tailored health promotion in their daily work routines.
Methods

Qualitative study:
• 18 semi-structured interviews
• aged 55-98 (average age 77.8)
• living in the Netherlands (origin from the Netherlands, Morocco, Turkey and Iraq)
• 17 women, 1 man

The framework analysis method was used to analyse the transcripts. Three themes emerged:
1. Daily routines and staying active;
2. Accepting and adapting;
3. Autonomy and reciprocity.
Healthy living: Daily routines

- Rust, Reinheid en Regelmaat (Rest, Purity/Cleanliness and Routines)
- A balanced diet
- Moderate alcohol intake
- No smoking

‘Having moments of rest and eating at regular times, structure your life with fixed moments, so, going to bed in time, getting up of bed in time, having breakfast in time, and lunch and dinner… having routines in life.’ [Dutch man, aged 85]
Healthy living: staying active

- ‘Still being able to do things by myself’
- ‘Going out with friends’
- ‘Enjoy eating with family’
- ‘Driving the car by yourself’
- ‘Walking to the mailbox’
- ‘Go to yoga’
- ‘Taking care of others’
Accepting and adapting

‘Then I get so angry with myself, and I think, darn! And then I see someone much older than me walking so briskly. Then I think, “Goodness me, I should still be able to do that too!” [Dutch woman, aged 70]

‘My mobility is limited, no matter how I look at it, that’s just the way it is. Given my age, I can accept it. It is more difficult when you are 25. When my leg was amputated, I was almost 80 and when I realize how many things I can still do at my age, I can only be grateful.’ [Dutch man, aged 85]
Interaction with professional: Autonomy and reciprocity

- Being autonomous
- Keeping things to yourself
- Equal relationships – sharing stories
- A relationship of trust

‘And I know what I’m allowed to do. Yes, I do many forbidden things of which I have to suffer the consequences of in the evening … then I think “well, at least I did it myself!” It is very difficult when you have been able to do everything yourself, and then have to ask; Will you do this for me? Will you do that for me? That is terrible.’ [Dutch woman, aged 77]
Conclusion/take home message

Older adults experience healthy living as living their lives actively and autonomously. When ageing, it is a challenge to accept and adapt to new circumstances.

Mutual trust is found of importance. Health professionals therefore should focus on building an equal relationship of trust and focus on autonomy and self-sufficiency when communicating about healthy living.
Thank you for your attention!!

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