

Title: Reducing loneliness and social isolation in older adults through a group physical activity interventionure

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Background: Loneliness and social isolation in adults over 65 years of age is a public health problem that can result in physical, social, and mental health changes. These include depression, anxiety, and an increase in chronic pain. Social isolation and loneliness may be experienced at any age, but it is more significant in older adulthood.

Purpose: The purpose of this research translation project was to utilize physical activity intervention to reduce feelings of loneliness and social isolation in a group of older adults living in a HUD Senior Independent Living Housing, in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Methods: The tools used were the UCLA – Loneliness Scale and Lubben Social Network Scale, which were used both before and after intervention. Intervention consisted of four sessions of physical activity (PA).

Results: The results of the Wilcoxon signed rank test based on an alpha value of .05 p.054 suggest that there was no statistically significant relationship between physical activity and feelings of social isolation and loneliness. Although the results found group physical activity did not have a significant impact on loneliness and social isolation, the COVID-19 pandemic was a determining factor in the increase in loneliness four weeks after the implementation of the activity. It should be noted that the sample participating in the project obtained a 100% participation rate in the four physical activity sections.

Conclusion: Implementing physical activity to reduce feelings of loneliness and social isolation benefited participants in re-integrating into social activities as well as improving the physical and emotional health.

Biography

Thomas Alne is an adult-gerontology acute care nurse practitioner with the Cardiology team at Pennsylvania Hospital. He received a MSN degree from the University of Pennsylvania and Holy Family University. He is currently working on his doctorate of nursing practice at the University of South Alabama. Thomas has a variety of experience working in a cardiac ICU, critical care transport, emergency department, cardiac catheterization lab, and teaching nursing students. He published 2 journal articles and a textbook chapter. He presented on a variety of topics such as LVAD, ECMO, targeted temperature management, and heart failure at numerous nursing conferences.