Is sport a viable physical activity option for older adults?

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Background

• Physical activity has **proven health benefits**

• Physical activity **declines with age**
  (Eime et al 2009, Breuer 2013, Palacios-Ceña 2012)

• **Increasing ageing population**
  (World Health Organisation 2015)
Background

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• Sport can **diversify physical activity options** for older adults

Background

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• **Physical activity**

• **Increasing ageing** population
  (World Health Organisation 2015)

• **Sport can diversify physical activity options** for older adults

“a human activity capable of achieving a result requiring physical exertion and/or physical skill which, by its nature and organisation, is competitive and is generally accepted as being a sport” (ASC, 2009)
Research aims

Aim 1  Older adults
• Investigate the benefits and barriers for older adults to participate in sport

Aim 2  Sporting organisations
• Investigate the benefits and barriers for sporting organisations to engage older adults in sport

Aim 3  Strategies
• Develop potential strategies to increase older adults’ sport participation

Data collection

Sport club members

- Sporting organisation representatives: n=5, Males & females (Cricket Australia, Tennis Australia)

- Cricket club members: n=4, Females (Playing and/or involved in a club)

- Tennis club members: n=7, Females (Playing and/or involved in a club)

- Non-sport club members: n=7, Females (Not involved in a sport club)

Adults aged 50+ years

- Cricket club members: n=6, Males (Playing and/or involved in a club)

- Tennis club members: n=5, Males (Playing and/or involved in a club)

- Non-sport club members: n=6, Males (Not involved in a sport club)
Benefits for older adults

Individual
- Social health
- Physical health
- Mental health

Social
- Social interaction
- Intergenerational opportunities
- Role models

Organisational
- Safety
- Flexibility of playing options

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Benefits for older adults

“In the world of cricket...you always have a friend”
(female, 69 yrs)

“It’s helped my health. I mean I don’t know where I’d be if I wasn’t playing tennis”
(male, 69 yrs)

“there is nothing better than playing with your kids”
(male, 62 yrs)

Barriers for older adults

**Individual**
- Physical health
- Lack of skill

**Social**
- Time constraints
- Societal factors
- Perceived concerns

**Organisational**
- Lack of playing opportunities
- Cost
- Lack of knowledge
- Inappropriate facilities
- Location
Barriers for older adults

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“I was very time poor, because you’re pulled in different directions” (female, 60 yrs)

“At some point the realisation came ‘I can’t compete with those kids anymore’ and there’s really nowhere else to go” (male, 62 yrs)

“As you get older, you’re more susceptible to injuries” (male, 53 yrs)
Benefit or barrier for older adults?

Physical health = barrier

Physical health = benefit

?

Benefit or barrier for older adults?

Physical health = barrier

Physical health = benefit

Heterogeneous age group
Benefits for SOs

Social
- Intergenerational opportunities
- Role models
- Member diversity

Organisational
- Volunteering
- Financial contributions
- Maximum facility usage
- Increased capacity to run club
- Maintaining their fan base

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“I think that they’re worth their weight in gold those guys. And they have great stories, and they should be celebrated. I’d love to have a beer with them”
(male, 39 yrs)

“you’re home and hosed if you get people our age because we slot into all the volunteer roles”
(female, 51 yrs)

“we do it [volunteering] for the kids...it’s like a big family”
(female, 51 yrs)
Barriers for SOs

Social
- Competing priorities
- Perceived societal expectations

Organisational
- Lack of appropriate playing opportunities
- Lack of access to playing facilities
- Lack of club volunteer capacity
- Marketing

Policy
- Focus on children and youth
- Risk management

Barriers for SOs

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Strategies to increase participation
Create age specific informal social play AND competitive opportunities

- Emphasise fun & social aspects
- Off peak sessions
Strategies to increase participation

Develop external partnerships:
  e.g. ‘Rusty Rackets’ program

  Informal & social sessions

  Exit strategies

Strategies to increase participation

Modify existing programs

  Develop age specific programs

  Amend modified kids’ sports
Strategies to increase participation

Amend marketing materials

- Feature older adults on materials
- Change societal expectations

Summary

Ageing population

Diverse PA options needed

Benefits & barriers
Summary

Ageing population + Diverse PA options needed + Benefits & barriers → Not that simple!

Summary

“You end up with crook knees, crook everything down the track, but I’ll still keeping coming even so, because it’s the fun”
(female, 70 yrs)
Questions...

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Publications:
• ASC report: Active and Healthy Ageing through Sport (2015)
  ➢ on ASC Clearinghouse for Sport portal

• ASC report & factsheet: Why don’t older adults participate in sport?
  ➢ Expected publication date: Sep/Oct 2016

• Journal article: Are they ‘worth their weight in gold’? Sport for older adults: benefits and barriers of their participation for sporting organisations
  ➢ Publication date: Dec 2016