

Recreational Therapy Evidence Based Practice Day Conference
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How the Use of Technology Affects Quality of Life (QOL) in Older Adults

Search Terms: Older Adults, Perception, Technology, Quality of Life

Years: 2003-2014

Databases: Google Scholar & AgeLine **Number of Articles:** 8

Summary of Literature:

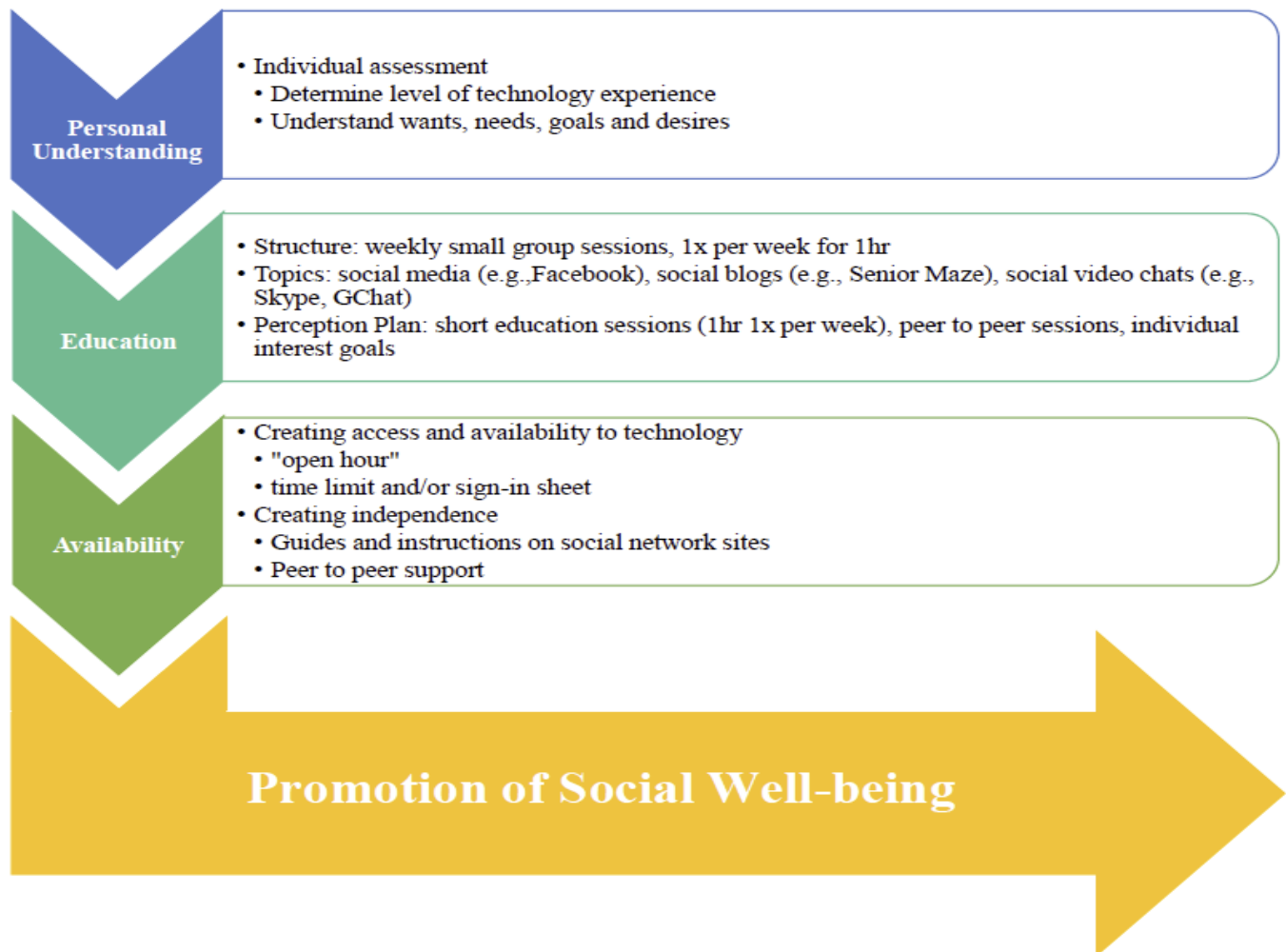
Technology has changed the way we conduct business and communicate with others. Many older adults have misperceptions about technology and do not realize how technology has the potential to benefit their quality of life by helping them stay connected with family and friends, expand their social network through social media, and find relevant health care information. The eight studies reviewed in this article examined different aspects of how older adults perceive, use and understand technology (Blit-Cohen & Litwin, 2004; Carpenter & Buday, 2007; Karavidas, Lim, & Katsikas, 2005) as well as how technology education programs can affect social well-being and quality of life (QOL) in the older population. The results of the reviewed articles support that older adults showed a growing interest in using technology (Nimrod, 2010). The articles also found that there is an increasing number of older adults using technology to stay socially connected, along with becoming up-to-date on current news and health information (Blit-Cohen & Litwin, 2004; Campbell, 2008). These findings dispelled the common myth that older adults do not want to adopt technology in their daily lives. With that being said, the findings also indicated the need for more educational opportunities and a greater understanding of the barriers (e.g., misperceptions of technology, financial resources, lack of equipment) older adults face when it comes to technology (Karavidas, Lim, & Katsikas, 2005). Interestingly, several of the articles found that even when they were trying to implement a specific technology intervention, such as how to locate useful health care information, the older adults, including those who were already “tech savvy,” were interested in using their new found knowledge to interact with others via different online channels (Campbell, 2008). The results of these studies revealed that for older adults, social interaction was the largest component of interest when using technology, regardless of their level of computer literacy. Knowing how technology can potentially help to keep older adults socially engaged, it is important to discuss how to introduce technology to older residents in long-term care facilities (LTC).

Knowledge Translation Plan:

Certified Therapeutic Recreational Specialists (CTRS) can promote social engagement by introducing older adults on how to use social networking sites, blogs and video chats, which in turn may help to decrease loneliness and depression as well as enhance self-confidence and independence. The aspect of social technology should be introduced by creating a non-threatening environment that eases older adults into today's modern social world and diminish their previous misperception by providing opportunities to explore different elements of technology. When developing education programs to introduce technology to older residents in LTC facilities, CTRS are encouraged to use small groups for one structured hour once a week with an “open hour” to follow. Prior to the program, CTRS should conduct individual assessments with older adults to determine appropriate participants by evaluating their levels of computer literacy, and their individual interests. The results of the assessment would help CTRS to select appropriate topics that would motivate the participants and create positive outcomes and responses. To promote social interaction, CTRS can lead sessions by introducing and explaining how to access different social networking outlets that would fit the interests of the older residents, such as joining blogs (e.g., Senior Maze), Facebook or social video chats (e.g., Skype, GChat). Also, when introducing social outlets, it is important to promote engagement and participation by employing peer to peer support, as well as providing opportunities for older residents to reconnect with family and friends via different social channels. CTRS can use “open hour” and create handouts to guide older adults using technology independently and to reinforce what was learned in the sessions. Finally, for successful outcomes, allow older residents opportunities to practice independently.

Post program, CTRS could collect data through questionnaire/survey to evaluate if the expected outcomes were achieved. For example, CTRS can evaluate (1) whether older residents have a better understanding about the

use of technology, (2) whether older adults have greater feelings of social engagement and independence, (3) how well older residents are able to integrate technology into everyday life, and (4) how older residents perceive the benefits of technology. If the facility has limited technology equipment available, CTRS and staff should consider a time limit or sign-up sheet for computer usage.



References

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