Population Aging and Physical Performance

One of the consequences of the demographic transition is the aging of the population, which is evidenced by changes in the age pyramid, with an increase in the proportion of elderly people in the population\(^1\). In Latin America, the region in which Brazil is inserted, the demographic transition began later, but more accelerated than other locations, in terms of the drops in birth and mortality rates\(^1\).

The United Nations (UN) estimates that, in 2050, there will be twice as many elderly people as there are today and, thus, they will surpass young people aged between 15 and 24 years in the general population\(^2\). Thus, this phenomenon challenges social, economic, and political preparation, which provides a more dignified future and protection of the rights of the elderly, who present peculiarities resulting from the senescence process, such as physical modifications\(^3\).

The progressive decrease in flexibility, muscle mass and muscle strength are frequent alterations\(^4\), which impact the functionality and physical independence of the elderly. Physical performance is one of the components that maintains physical independence and can be related to lower and upper limb activities, such as Handgrip Strength (HGS). The decline of HGS with advancing chronological age is a reality\(^5,6\), which has an impact on the elderly population.

The survival of the elderly is increased when physical performance is preserved, whether of the lower limbs or HGS\(^7,8\). The maintenance of muscle health with advancing age is a necessary care in the population, so that it is preserved and has positive repercussions and, consequently, provides better functionality and independence\(^9\).

The elderly have guaranteed rights to a quality future and, therefore, they must participate effectively in the development of society\(^2\). Health professionals should pay attention to the physical health of the elderly, stimulating and working on the physical performance of the general population, since the adults of today will be the elderly of tomorrow.

The practice of physical exercises, from strengthening, flexibility and physical conditioning, brings gains and/or maintenance in muscle mass and strength, positively impacting physical performance and, consequently, in the aging of the population with better quality.
REFERENCES


