

research snapshot

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Age Differences in Barriers to Cardiac Rehabilitation

What is this research about?

Heart disease is the leading cause of death and disability worldwide. Cardiac rehabilitation (CR) is an approach to secondary prevention that includes exercise training, education, and counseling. Despite the many benefits of CR, in the US and Canada, where only a select few are referred to and ultimately participate in CR, the usage rates among older patients are significantly lower. Little is known about why older patients do not participate in CR.

What did the researchers do?

The researchers conducted a study that examined CR barriers related to age and program participation. One thousand four hundred and ninety seven patients with heart disease completed a survey. Nine months later, 1273 participants completed a follow-up survey. In the follow-up survey, participants were asked to report if they participated in CR and the percentage of prescribed sessions they attended. This survey also included an 18-item questionnaire which listed potential barriers to participation in CR.

Each question within this measure ranged from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree.

What you need to know:

Older patients with heart disease experience more CR barriers, and the nature of their barriers differs from those of younger patients. Health care professionals should identify and address these barriers in order to optimize the benefits of CR use for elderly patients.

What did the researchers find?

Results showed that only about half of the participants (53.4%) were referred to CR, and the amount that participated was even lower (43%). Health care professionals prescribed the program more often to younger patients than older patients. Also, a greater number of younger patients enrolled in CR compared to older patients. Patients reported attending about 85% of sessions, and this did not differ by age. Overall, older patients reported more barriers to enrollment and participation in CR than younger patients. Older patients experienced the following barriers to CR more than younger patients:

- already exercising at home;
- confidence in ability to self-manage disease;

- perception of exercise as tiring or painful;
- not knowing about CR;
- lack of physician encouragement;
- thinking that other patients do not attend CR;
- having other diseases;
- the belief that CR will not improve their health.

Younger patients more strongly experienced/ reported work responsibilities and time constraints as CR barriers than older patients.

How can you use this research?

Similar to previous research, this study showed that older patients with heart disease have greater barriers to using CR. This study also showed that the nature of older patients' CR barriers differs from those of younger patients. Health care professionals should be encouraged to prescribe CR programs customized to the needs of elderly patients with heart disease, to explain the many benefits of participation in CR to older patients, provide written information about CR, and actively encourage patient participation.

About the Researchers

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This research was supported by Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) grant MOP-74431, and Dr. Grace is also supported by CIHR salary award MSH-80489. In addition, Ms. Shanmugasegaram is supported in her graduate studies by CIHR.

Citation

Grace, S. L. , Shanmugasegaram, S., Gravely-Witte, S., Brual, J., Suskin, N., & Stewart, D. E. (2009). Barriers to cardiac rehabilitation: Does age make a difference? *Journal of Cardiopulmonary Rehabilitation and Prevention*, 29(3), 183-187. Available online at <http://1.usa.gov/1d7HBeG>

Keywords

Age, Barriers, Cardiac rehabilitation, Heart disease, Secondary prevention

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