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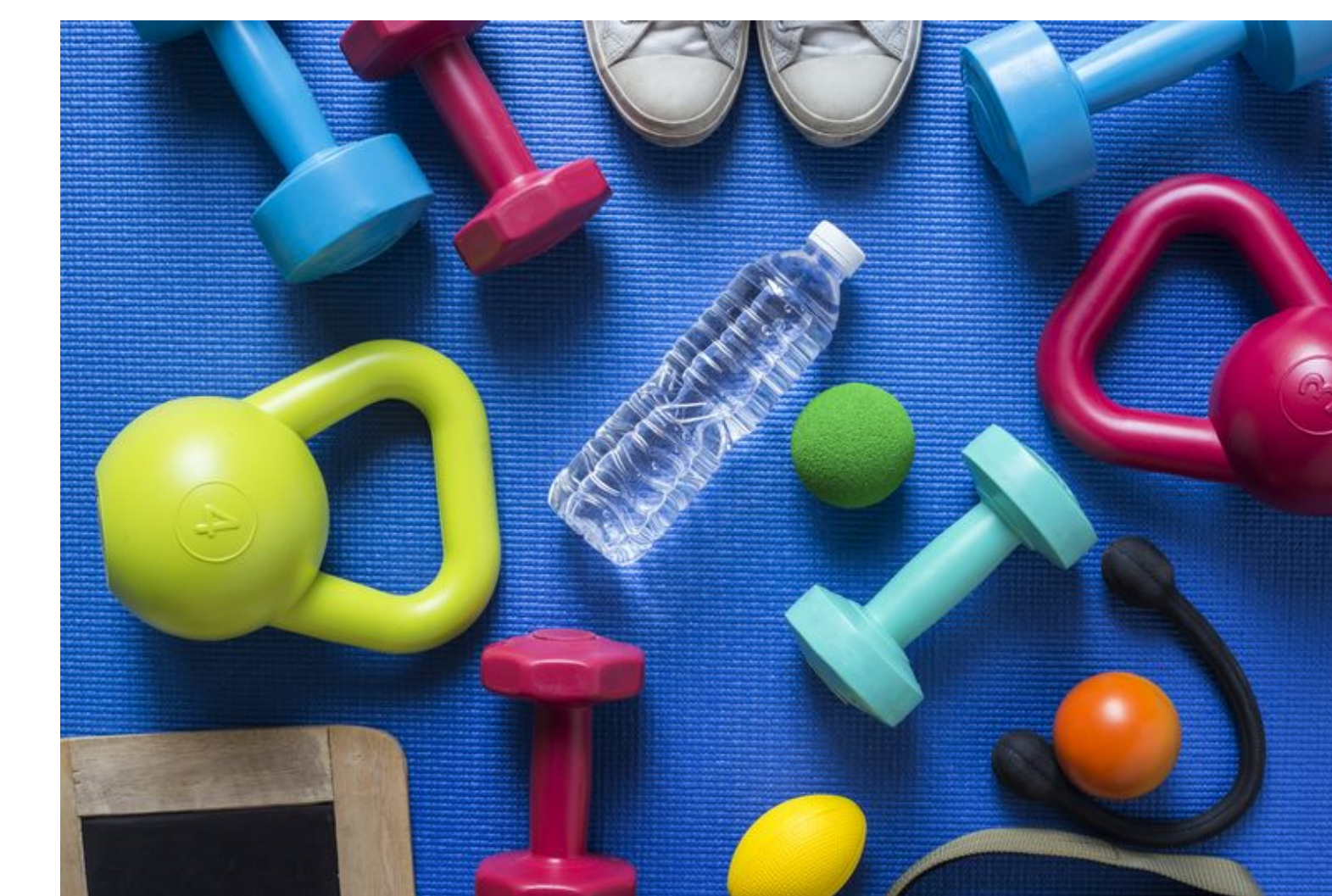
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Facilitators and Barriers to Older Adults Engaging in Physical Activities

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Introduction

In order for a growing aging population to preserve independence for as long as possible, older adults need to maintain their mobility levels, largely through participating in physical activity (Costello, Kafchinski, Vrazel, & Sullivan, 2011). The importance of physical activity is widely recognized, yet older adults are the least active age group in the United States (Bethancourt, Rosenberg, Beatty, & Arterburn, 2014). This qualitative study focuses on the facilitators and barriers regarding physical activity through individual interviews with older women ($N=7$) residing in an independent living community. Understanding more about what contributes to engagement in physical activities will help to inform how wellness programs can be structured among older adults within this type of residential community.

Research Questions

1. How do older adults perceive the role of physical activity in their aging process?
2. What are the barriers and facilitators regarding engagement in physical activities?

Sample Characteristics	
Age	M = 81.4; (SD = 7.0)
Gender	F = 7; M = 0
Marital Status	Widowed = 5
	Married = 1
	Divorced = 1
Rating of Physical Health	Moderate = 1
	Good = 4
	Very Good = 2
Frequency of Exercise	Daily = 3
	3 times/week = 3
	1 time/week = 1

Form of Exercise

- 6 participants were involved in exercise classes offered at their retirement facility
- All participants noted that walking was one form of regular physical activity
- 3 participants used exercise equipment available at their retirement facility
 - “I walk every day. I do line dancing once a week, and I come to exercise class 6 times a week.”

Trudy, age 71



Importance of Physical Activity

- Most participants felt that being physically active was “very” important
- Only one participant felt physical activity was “fairly” important
- Participants felt that it was important to be physically active to maintain their mobility levels and prevent health decline

“Physical activity is very important. I like to keep busy and occupied, and keep my body going.”

Mae, age 76

Facilitators and Barriers

Facilitators:

- Social engagement
- Maintaining physical health and mobility
 - “I’m up and about, I don’t have to use a cane or a wheelchair or anything like that, and I want to keep it that way.”

Aggie, age 90

Barriers:

- Lack of motivation
- Physical limitations

“I can’t do everything I used to do. I used to swim 3 times a week, but I can’t do that until my body improves.”

Etta, age 87



Discussion and Implications

- Participants understand the importance of physical activity
- Social engagement was identified as a large facilitator of physical activity engagement
- Listening to music during physical activity increased enjoyment of physical activity
- Opportunities for physical activity in retirement facilities should be maintained and increased