From Non-Sporting Lives to Active Ageing: A Qualitative Exploration of Older Women's Participation in a Free Community-Based Outdoor Exercise Program

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Background & Aim

- Regular physical activity (PA) is key to healthy ageing
- Older women's participation remains lower than recommended
- Little is known about how lifelong sport experience shapes activity in later life
- Aim: explore perceptions of PA and the role of a free outdoor program

Methods

- Qualitative study in a free, semi-formal community exercise program in a public park
- Data collected through semi-structured interviews
- Analysed using reflexive thematic analysis

Results

- Limited sport involvement despite an accepting social context
- Mostly negative or indifferent experiences with school physical education
- Few physically active role models within the family
- Sport never became part of personal or family identity

Conclusion

- Engages older women without an existing sporting identity
- Reducing financial, social and psychological barriers supports active ageing
- A promising pathway for underrepresented populations

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