Multicentre cluster randomised trial comparing a community group exercise programme and home-based exercise with usual care for people aged 65 years and over in primary care

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Declared competing interests of authors: Dawn Skelton and Susie Dinan are directors for Later Life Training, who deliver FaME and OEP training to health and leisure professionals across the UK. The other authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Published August 2014
DOI: 10.3310/hta18490
Plain English summary

The ProAct65+ study
Health Technology Assessment 2014; Vol. 18: No. 49
DOI: 10.3310/hta18490

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Plain English summary

Physical activity (PA) in later life can improve physical and mental health and quality of life, yet many older adults are inactive.

The ProAct65+ trial tested two methods of promoting PA with older people, one with weekly classes and the other with home exercises, both for 24 weeks. The aim of the study was to examine if the two exercise programmes were effective in increasing levels of PA 12 months after each programme ended.

We invited people aged ≥65 years from 43 general practices to take part in the study, and 1256 did so. Practices were randomly allocated to have class exercises, home exercise or usual care (with no special exercise plan). We measured different aspects of health and well-being. The aim was to increase the proportion of participants who reached or exceeded 150 minutes per week of moderate to vigorous PA.

Participants were followed up for 12 months after the exercise intervention ended. Significantly more of those participants in the exercise classes than in the usual-care group reached the target for PA at the 12-month follow-up. Those who had home exercise alone were no more likely to reach the PA target compared with the usual-care group. At follow-up the exercise class group had significantly fewer falls than the usual-care group, but there was no significant difference for the exercise at home group. Participants in the exercise class arm were more likely to be positive about exercise at follow-up. There were no other changes in health and well-being.
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This report

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the HTA programme as project number 06/36/04. The contractual start date was in June 2008. The draft report began editorial review in October 2013 and was accepted for publication in February 2014. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The HTA editors and publisher have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors’ report and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the draft document. However, they do not accept liability for damages or losses arising from material published in this report.

This report presents independent research funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The views and opinions expressed by authors in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the HTA programme or the Department of Health. If there are verbatim quotations included in this publication the views and opinions expressed by the interviewees are those of the interviewees and do not necessarily reflect those of the authors, those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the HTA programme or the Department of Health.

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