Author's response to reviews

Title: Participation levels of physical activity programs for community-dwelling older adults: a systematic review

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Reviewer1: Freya MacMillan
Reviewer’s report:
The authors have sufficiently addressed my previous comments and the paper reads much better now. I list a few minor amendments required below:

1. Abstract, methods section: Please include here that you excluded primary care based studies.

   To the method section of the abstract, we added:

   ‘(i.e. not in a primary care setting and/or assisted living or nursing home)’

2. Intro, line 55: insert ‘years’ after 55.

   We inserted ‘years’ after 55.

3. Results, line 150: delete ‘activities’ after PA.

   We deleted ‘activities’ after PA.

4. Discussion, line 192: ‘...have insight INTO the number of...’ and line 194 ‘gives insight INTO potential...’

   We changed in both lines: ‘in’ into ‘ into’.

5. Conclusion, line 206: delete ‘a’ before ‘program’

   We deleted ‘a’ before ‘program’.

Reviewer2: Jonine Jancey
Reviewer’s report:
This ms is much improved. I have attached a study that meets criteria for this SR but not included in the SR. I have also included a ms that may be of interest to you in regard to this review (unable to upload second article).

This is a very interesting and relevant article related to our study. Since it did not evaluate the effect on at least one component of physical activity (e.g. frequency, duration), it does not meet the inclusion criteria as described in the section ‘study selection’ (lines 86-90). However, we did include in the discussion section:

‘Jancey et al. (2007) showed that can be related to low socioeconomic status, overweight, low PA level at the start, low walking self-efficacy, and loneliness may also be related to low sustained participation levels of PA programs among older adults (35).’

Reviewer3: Reviewer: Natasha Reid
Reviewer’s report:
I would just like to congratulate you on re-writing this paper to a much better standard of scientific writing and expression. I think it now provides a clear and concise overview of the research questions, and provides some important reflections and comments on future work so that we can better answer your questions within the research field. I only have very minor discretionary revisions this time and am happy for the paper to be published without another review.

1. Abstract
Consider changing “Proportion of participants starting and completing the PA programs (respectively initial and sustained participation) were determined” to “Proportion of participants starting and completing the PA program (initial and sustained participation, respectively) were determined” Considering changing “for 12 PA programs is was impossible...” to “for 12 PA programs is was not possible...”

We changed

‘Proportions of participants starting and completing the PA programs (respectively initial and sustained participation) were determined.’

Into

‘Proportions of participants starting and completing the PA programs (initial and sustained participation, respectively) were determined.’

And

‘impossible’ into ‘not possible’

2. Background
Paragraph 2, first sentence: Be clear about you mean here. For example “Initial and sustained participation in PA programs is important....”

‘Initial and sustained participation is important for achieving public health impact (7).’
‘High initial and sustained participation in PA programs is important for achieving public health impact (7).’

In the very last sentence in this section, you mention that PA programs were characterised. I would suggest providing a bit more information on how or what they were characterised.

We changed:
‘Furthermore, PA programs with high initial and sustained participation levels were characterised.’

Into
‘Furthermore, it was investigated what program characteristics and characteristics of participants distinct PA programs with higher participation levels from PA programs with lower participation levels.’

3. Study Selection
Paragraph 1, last sentence: You say that studies that reported on study protocols were excluded. Do you mean that studies that ONLY reported on protocols were excluded? Make this clearer.

We changed
‘and/or reported on study protocols.’

Into
‘..and/or reported on study protocols only.’

4. Data Extraction
Change “way of recruitment” to “method of recruitment”

In lines 101 and 189, and in Table 1 we changed ‘way of recruitment’ into ‘method of recruitment’

5. Discussion
In the first paragraph you say that initial participation could not be calculated for 5 PA programs – I believe this is supposed to say 12 PA programs.

We think this is a misreading of the reviewer, since we stated:
‘The mean proportion of participants starting the program (initial participation level) was 9.2%, but could only be calculated for five PA programs.’

6. Conclusions
The word “hampered” – perhaps change to “hindered”

We changed ‘hampered’ into ‘hindered’.

7.
You mentioned that a low mean age, high proportion of females etc are likely to increase levels of sustained participation. I think this may be making too much of the results as the power was very low. Perhaps say that “these factors should be investigated further as potential determinants of sustained participation.” You also may want to call for future studies to make it best practice to include information regarding how many people were invited to participate in the PA program.

Well done.

From the first paragraph of the discussion, we deleted:

‘…, but the size of the correlations indicated that a low mean age of the participants, high proportions of females participating, short duration of the program, and a small group size are likely to increase levels of sustained participation. The small number of studies that were eligible for inclusion may have resulted in finding no significant correlations.’

And added paragraph 4:

‘No significant correlations were found for participant or program characteristics with sustained participation level which may be due to the small number of studies that were eligible for inclusion. Although the size of the correlations indicated that a low mean age of the participants, high proportions of females participating, short duration of the program, and a small group size are likely to increase levels of sustained participation, these factors should be investigated further as potential determinants of sustained participation.’

To the discussion section, we added:

‘Therefore, for future studies it is highly recommended to include information regarding the number of persons that were invited to participate in the PA program.’