



A review summary:

Meaningful Lifestyle Activities in Aged Care

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Key Points

- A scoping review of systematic reviews identified 13 reviews on meaningful lifestyle activities in the aged care context published since 2013.
- The systematic reviews focused on a range of themes and activities that were considered meaningful. These included person-centred care, nature-based activities, social activities, and physical activities.
- All reviews (n = 13) considered the importance of meaningful social interactions in the aged care context.
- Most of the evidence for meaningful lifestyle activities refers to older adults living with dementia residing in aged care.

Background

The remit of the newly established Knowledge and Implementation Hub of the Aged Care Research and Industry Innovation Australia (ARIIA) is to identify and synthesise the existing evidence of best practices in aged care provision. ARIIA has identified meaningful lifestyle activities as one of the priority areas based on a survey of the sector. [1] This report summarises preliminary findings of a scoping review of the existing synthesised literature on meaningful lifestyle activities in the aged care setting. The review was undertaken to understand how meaningful lifestyle activities are considered in aged care.

Meaningful lifestyle activities

Meaningful lifestyle activities in residential aged care are recognised as activities that are enjoyable and engage older adults to an extent where they experience benefits in emotional wellbeing, cognitive status, and physical functioning. [2] Despite the benefit of both physical and social participation, some aged care residents have been found to spend over 45 per cent of their day alone in their own room. [3] Identifying meaningful lifestyle activities is often complex, as these activities will be unique to an individual's preferences as well as their past, present, and future. [4]

Older adults who live at home can also find it difficult to participate in meaningful activities and rely on home care services for support. [5] Providing opportunities for older adults to participate in activities they deem meaningful is important to support ongoing independence and dignity, to maintain good health, wellbeing, and quality of life, and to increase feelings of happiness as they age. [6-9] Therefore, it is important that activities are meaningful to the individual, have a purpose, and respect the differences and abilities of each person receiving aged care. Older adults will often engage with activities that are suited to their abilities and linked to their identity, goals, and interests. These activities also provide the opportunity for meaningful social interaction and engagement.

Objectives of this review

This review summarises the initial findings of the scoping review conducted to explore the extent of, and map, the published literature on meaningful lifestyle activities in aged care settings.

Methods

The review sought evidence from systematic reviews published in the last 10 years.

Search strategy

Six major databases were searched using an extensive range of search terms describing (1) meaningful lifestyle activities, (2) aged care (home-based and residential), and (3) systematic reviews. The databases searched were: CINAHL (EBSCOhost), Medline (Ovid), PsycInfo, Scopus, Embase and International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS).

Inclusion criteria

Reviews were included if they:

- reported meaningful lifestyle activities in the context of aged care
- were published in the English language
- were published between 2012 and October 12, 2022
- documented their processes for reducing bias, including a comprehensive and replicable search strategy and a formal critical appraisal of their included studies.

Screening, selection, extraction, and presentation

All citations were collated and saved in EndNote v20 (Clarivate Analytics, PA, USA) and duplicates were removed. Screening and selection were undertaken by two independent reviewers using Covidence. The author, year, population, context setting, aims, interventions, and practical implications were extracted and summarised based on the focus of the reviews and presented using tables. The foci of the reviews were named 'evidence themes'.

Results

Following the removal of duplicates, 693 citations were screened independently by two authors of this review against the inclusion criteria. This process resulted in a final set of 13 systematic reviews for analysis.

The common ideas arising from the reviews identified were named as 'evidence themes'. The 13 systematic reviews informed multiple evidence themes. The list of evidence themes, a brief description of what they covered and the number of reviews informing them are presented in the table below.

Table 1. Summary of systematic reviews on meaningful lifestyle activities in aged care

Theme	Description	Number of reviews
Meaningful social activities	Social activities include communication and interaction with others. Engaging in regular social activities is an important part of healthy ageing	13
Dementia	Dementia is a syndrome (a collection of symptoms) caused by disorders impacting the brain. It can affect thinking, behaviour, language, memory, personality, and the ability to perform everyday tasks	12
Person-centred approach	Person-centred approaches focus on the care needs and preferences of the individual person, rather than their disease or diagnosis. This approach considers the personal preference of the individual and their activities and interests prior to receiving aged care	6
Nature-based activities	A nature-based activity is a meaningful and enjoyable activity taking place in nature, immersed in hands-on activities with the natural world or appreciating nature	6
Physical activities	Physical activity is any bodily movement produced by muscles that require energy expenditure and include activities for leisure, transportation or as part of occupational duties	4
Music-based interventions	Music-based interventions including music therapy can include activities such as playing an instrument, singing, or moving to music	3
Animal assisted interventions or pet therapy	Pet therapy (or animal-assisted therapy) is a complementary therapy that includes the use of animals as part of treatment	2
Intergenerational programs	Intergenerational programs are social engagement strategies that aim to increase interaction, cooperation, and exchange among individuals from two or more generations	1

Most of the evidence for meaningful lifestyle activities reports on interventions and observations of older adults living with dementia. For more information on interventions that may be meaningful to older adults living with dementia please see resources available on Dementia Care provided in the Knowledge and Implementation Hub on our website, <https://www.ariia.org.au/knowledge-implementation-hub/dementia-care>

Statement of overall evidence quality

Evidence for meaningful lifestyle activities in the context of aged care is limited and most of the included reviews were small. Some high-quality studies were included in reviews, and observational and qualitative data provided rich description on the perceptions of meaningful lifestyle activities from carers, families, and care recipients. Further research in this area is required with larger samples of older people with varying health status to represent the wider population.

References

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ARIIA was established as an independent, not-for-profit organisation, set up to lead the advancement of the aged care workforce capability by promoting and facilitating innovation and research to improve the quality of aged care for all Australians.

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