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Evaluating and Reflecting on Virtual Exercise Programs during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract : Introduction: The COVID-19 pandemic has altered the lifestyle of all Canadians. While "stay-at-home" public health directives have been implemented to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, they may also lead to or worsen physical and social health challenges for older adults. In particular, older adults with disabilities are especially vulnerable. In response, we quickly adapted to virtual rehabilitation exercise intervention for older adults. Objectives: First, to identify the factors that influenced the acceptability and feasibility of virtual exercise implementation, and second, to evaluate whether the virtual delivery was effective for health promotion in older adults with disabilities. Methods: We carried out weekly virtual exercise programs from January 2021 to June 2021. We conducted semi-structured focus groups and interviews to explore the perspectives of participants who are older adults. The focus group and interview data are transcribed and coded thematically. Conclusions: The acceptability and feasibility of delivering exercises virtually were influenced by the provision of a safe and supportive environment for social connection, the availability of the necessary technology, and the role of the support system.

Keywords : physical activity, virtual exercises, older adults, people with disabilities
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