Sneakers not Slippers - Promoting Cross-Cultural Connections and Enhancing the Health of Multicultural Seniors

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AIMS
This study aims to examine the effect of a 12-week outdoor senior exercise park program on social connectedness, feelings of loneliness, wellness and independence in multicultural seniors.

METHODS
• Sample: Multicultural seniors from the Migrant Resource Centre North West Region Inc. in Melbourne.
• Program: 12-week outdoor senior exercise park program.
• Measurements of loneliness, wellness and independence (e.g., balance, muscle strength and physical function) were compared between baseline and at 12 weeks.
• Exit interviews to explore their perceptions (e.g., acceptability of the program and perceived benefits achieved from participation) of the program.

RESULTS
• Thirty-one seniors took part in the program (65 ± 8.1 years; 29 females; 2 males).
• Perceived improvements on physical, social and mental wellness, pain management, and ability to better perform their activities of daily living were reported via interviews.
• Improvement in loneliness was inconclusive with only more proficient in English groups showing improvements.
• Best improvements in wellness (via questionnaire) were in social wellness (6%) and physical wellness (3%).

SIGNIFICANCE OF FINDINGS
This initiative demonstrated the positive effect of the outdoor senior exercise park program on seniors’ social connectedness, feelings of loneliness (proficient in English groups only), wellness, and independence among people from multicultural background.

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