

O processo de envelhecimento na visão de estudantes universitários da área da saúde

Gisele Ferreira Chaves¹, Rafaela Sanches de Oliveira²,
Renato Ribeiro Nogueira Ferraz³, Eliziane Nitz de Carvalho Calvim⁴

RESUMO

Verificar a perspectiva de estudantes universitários da área de saúde sobre o processo de envelhecimento, sobre o idoso e adoção de hábitos saudáveis, que possam ajudar a prevenir e/ou controlar doenças, além de manter a capacidade funcional no envelhecimento. Métodos: Estudo descritivo transversal, composto por 200 estudantes universitários. Os questionários foram aplicados em estudantes da Universidade Nove de Julho (UNINOVE), São Paulo, Brasil, dos cursos de graduação em fisioterapia, enfermagem e psicologia. Dos 200 questionários, 13 foram excluídos porque estavam incompletos. Resultados: 85% dos entrevistados acreditavam que o envelhecimento bem-sucedido é o envelhecimento com boa condição física e mental; 47,60% relataram medo de ser dependente dos outros; 28,50% acreditavam que se tornarão idosos somente quando apresentarem dificuldades na realização de tarefas diárias; e 70,40% relataram sempre respeitar os direitos dos idosos. No geral, 65,2% dos entrevistados não apresentavam hábitos de vida saudáveis que levem a um processo de envelhecimento bem-sucedido. Conclusão: Os resultados mostraram que, na maioria dos casos, os entrevistados relataram respeitar os direitos dos idosos. No entanto, apresentaram uma visão negativa sobre o idoso e o processo de envelhecimento.

Descritores: Gestão em Saúde; Envelhecimento; Educação; Saúde do Idoso.

The process of aging and the elderly under the vision of university students in the health field

ABSTRACT

Objective: Verify the perspective of university students of health facing the process of aging and about the elderly and the adoption of healthy habits, that may help to prevent and/or control illnesses and maintain the functional capacity of the aging. Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional study composed of 200 college students. Questionnaires were applied to students at Universidade Nove de Julho (UNINOVE), Sao Paulo, Brazil, in the physical therapy, nursing and psychology programs. Of the 200 questionnaires, 13 were excluded because they were incomplete. Results: 85.00% of respondents believe that successful aging is aging with good physical and mental condition, 47.60% fear being dependent on others, 28.50% believe that they become elderly when they present difficulties in performing everyday tasks and 70.40% always respect the rights of the elderly. Overall, respondents do not maintain healthy life habits that would lead to a successful process of aging, 65.2% do not exercise. Conclusion: The results showed that in most cases the interviewees respect the rights of the elderly; however, they have a negative view of the aging process and the elderly.

Descriptors: Aging; Education; Health of the Elderly.

¹ Especialista em Fisioterapia Músculo-Esquelética pela Faculdade de Ciências Médicas da Santa Casa de SP (FCMSCSP), São Paulo, SP, Brasil.

² Mestre em Ciências da Saúde pela Universidade de São Paulo (USP), São Paulo, SP, Brasil.

³ Doutor em Ciências pela Universidade Federal de São Paulo (UNIFESP), São Paulo, SP, Brasil.

⁴ Doutora em Cirurgia Translacional pela Universidade Federal de São Paulo (UNIFESP), São Paulo, SP, Brasil.

Introduction

We are part of a society in which children and adults prepare for the future imagining an adequate quality of life, college graduation, securing a good job, and making a living doing something that is fulfilling. Old age or disability do not seem to worry a majority of people, nonetheless, it brings up the question of how this process will be^{1,2}. Generally when you speak of old age what comes to mind is the powerlessness and/or illnesses associated with it. We should think about a successful aging process and not the infirmity that aging could cause³. It had been suggested that there are various necessary factors in order for the aging process to occur in a positive manner, among these are socioeconomic positions, physical and mental health, independence in your daily life, social integration, familial support, among others³.

There are possibilities of making the aging process positive, but for that one must think of the circumstances in which well-being, pleasure and quality of life should be present. Therefore, it is important to emphasize not only other people as they age, but also the elderly themselves about the importance of keeping themselves active, appreciating a good quality of life and thereby eventually having a lust for life, and being aware of their significance within society³. It had been shown that some people view the elderly as being frail or incapacitated, bringing with it accentuated social inequalities. The misinformation, discrimination and the disrespect of the senior citizens, compounds the precariousness of public investments for the specific care necessities of the elderly, factors such as these, point to the urgent need for change in the care of the elderly.

According to Queiroz and Ruiz⁴, there is disproportionality in the quality of programs related to the elderly. This includes the lack of qualifications among the professional operatives working with the elderly, the lack of human resources devoted to these programs, the lack of quality and quantity of programs that are dedicated to the elderly, and being that these are the minimal requirements to have a more humane means of service for the elderly of our country, unfortunately today we are still beholden to these citizens^{5,6}. Currently, The Brazilian Ministry of Health includes the elderly as a priority on their health agenda to guarantee comprehensive health care there of, seeking a healthy and active aging process, but this practice is not always applied. The misinformation and disproportion with regard to the elderly reflects the few studies related to this topic^{2,4}.

Purpose

To gain better knowledge regarding the thoughts of young individuals about the elderly and thereby, to be able to take measurements of public health and educational [materials] to guarantee a dignified process of aging not only for those that are presently elderly but also for the elderly people of the future, the objectives of the present study are: 1 - Verify the perspective of university students of health facing the process of aging and about the elderly; 2 - Verify the adoption of healthy habits, that may help to prevent and/or control illnesses and maintain the functional capacity of the aging.

Methodology

A cross-sectional and descriptive and random study, from april to june 2012, was conducted with 200 students from UNINOVE, from the physical therapy, nursing and psychology programs, all of them being students between their second and eighth semester, they all signed a free and clear consent form. The questionnaires contained 13 multiple choice questions with an average time of 15 minutes to fill it out, the questionnaires were distributed to students and delivered the researcher the next day. These questions that express an academic view about the process of aging and of the elderly, developed by the authors of the study by having no specific questionnaire in the literature covering the need, in addition to containing data for socioeconomic characterization such as: gender, age, marital status, occupation, approximate income, presences of children in their household, semester, and major or course of studies.

Our inclusion criteria included: student in the area of health that are between their first and eighth semester; who agree to participate in the study and sign the consent form. Our exclusion criteria were: anyone over the age of 55 years old; a carrier of a visual impairment which would make it impossible to fill out the questionnaire. After collecting the data, it was analyzed and the observed results were presented in a descriptive format, analyze using the statistical program "SPSS 17.0 for Windows" (Statistical Package for Social Science® version 17.0). This research was authorized by the Committee of Ethics in research of UNINOVE, under the protocol number 69752/2012.

Results

Of the 200 questionnaires 13 were excluded due to the fact that they were incomplete. The socioeconomic characteristics of respondents were: the average age of people interviewed was 26 years old with SD of 6.21, predominantly female 80.6% (N=150), in relation to marital status 74.7% (N=139) were single, 23.10% (N=43) were married and 2.20% (N=4) were divorced. According to the area of occupation of respondents 30.5% (N=57) work in the administrative field, while, 19.80% (N=37) work in the health industry and 17.64% (N=33) work in the commercial sector, the average personal income of respondents is R\$1,562.33 with SD of 891.65. Among the programs frequented by the respondents 41.5% (N= 78) are in physical therapy programs, 37.6% (N=70) are in the nursing program and 20.40% (N=38) are in the psychology program, 29.3% (N=54) are in their fifth semester, 24.50% (N=45) are in their third semester and 20.70% (N=38) are in their fourth semester.

Regarding the questionnaire that evaluates the academic view about the process of aging and the elderly, 85.00% (N=159) believe that a successful aging process is to age with a good physical and mental condition, 47.60% (N=89) are afraid of being dependent on other people, 28.50% (N=53) believe that they will become elderly when they present difficulty in the execution of day to day tasks, while, 27.40% (N=51) believe that they will become elderly when they have difficulty in executing task that require greater agility and/or conditioning, 33% (N= 62) have the loss of muscle strength as their major concern, leading to difficulty walking up and down stairs, while 31.60% (N=59) are worried about the diminished learning capacity, memory, and concentration, 50.30% (N=91) believe that one of the most difficult tasks for an elderly person to accomplish is to participate in extreme sports, while, 32.00% (N=58) believe that for the elderly it is difficult to maintain good health, while, 61.30% (N=114) see the elderly as normal human beings capable of accomplishing any activity and/or task, 48% (N=88) would like for their aging process to be healthy and that they will be able to enjoy their retirement, while, 31.70% (N=58) want to enjoy their family and their grandchildren, 48% (N=88) believe that the quality of life of the elderly is affected negatively by the lack of respect they are given by other people, while, 31.70% (N=58) believe that small monthly income directly interferes with their quality of life (table 1)

Table 1 – Demonstration of results of inquiries made to the university students regarding their perceptions about the elderly and aging (São Paulo, Brazil, 2012).

	Total	Percent(%)
What do you consider to be a successful aging process?		
To grow old with a good socioeconomic condition	12	6,40
To grow old with a good physical and mental condition	159	85,00
To grow old surrounded by close to friends	14	7,50
To grow old without esthetically seeming to be the age that you are	12	1,10
What are you most afraid of when you become elderly?		
To be alone	26	13,90
To have a lowered socioeconomic condition	9	4,80
To exhibit physical incapacities	24	12,80
To exhibit mental incapacities	36	19,30
To be dependent on other people	89	47,60
Frustrations	3	1,60
When do you believe that you become elderly?		
When you reach 60 years old	41	22,00
When you notice difficulty in executing tasks that require greater agility and/or conditioning	51	27,40
When you notice difficulty in executing day to day tasks	53	28,50
When you notice difficulty in remembering commonplace facts, finding the words to compose sentences/ phrases and attention problems	29	15,60
When they physically exhibit their age through wrinkles, hair loss or graying hair, changes in body composition	12	6,50

Continua...

	Total	Percent (%)
Which changes with regard to aging worry you the most?		
Facial and body aesthetics	19	10,20
Decline of cardiovascular condition, leading to easier fatigue	28	15,00
Decline in bone density augmenting the chance of having osteoporosis	11	5,90
Gastrointestinal distress, such as intolerance to certain foods	8	4,30
Loss of muscle strength resulting in difficulty walking up or down stairs	62	33,00
Diminished learning capacity, memory, and concentration	59	31,60
What would be the most difficult task for an elderly person to accomplish?		
To participate in extreme sports	91	50,30
To preside over a large business	11	6,10
To attend a university	9	5,00
To maintain adequate interpersonal relationships	8	4,40
To manage finances	4	2,20
To maintain good health	58	32,00
How do you see the elderly?		
As a human being incapable of accomplishing certain tasks	18	9,70
As a curmudgeonly person that always complains about everything	1	0,50
As a person that possesses a wide range of illnesses	5	2,70
As a normal human being capable of accomplishing any activity or day to day task	114	61,30
None of the above	48	25,80
What do you hope/ expect your aging process [will be like]?		
To be debilitated in a bed depending on a care-taker	2	1,10
To be healthy and enjoy retirement	88	48,00
To live/ experience everything that you didn't experience when young	14	7,70
To be financially stable	17	9,30
To enjoy family and grandchildren	58	31,70
None of these options	4	2,20
What affects the quality of life of the elderly?		
The lack of leisure options for them	2	1,12
A lack of respect given to them by other people	88	49,16
Good relationships with family and friends	14	7,82
Implementation of healthy life habits	17	9,50
To have a good income, since without that it is impossible to have a good quality of life	58	32,40

Regarding actions taken by respondents (table 2), which pertains to modes of collective transport, 78.6% (N=147) readily get up or not sit in a preferential seat, 63.6% (N=119) give preference to the elderly boarding [the public transport], 66.3% (N=124) help elderly people get on the bus and/or read the name of the bus, 61.5% (N=115) readily get up from their seat even if the seat is not preferential, 63.1% (N=118) do not utilize preferential lines for service, 77.5% (N=145) do not help the elderly carry grocery bags and or pack ages on a daily basis, 70.40% (N=131) always respect the rights of the elderly, however there has not been data and/or variables about the knowledge of respondents regarding those rights, while 29.00% (N=54) sometimes respect the rights of the elderly.

Regarding the practices of healthy life habits, 65.2% (N=122) do not participate in regular physical activity, 57.8% (N=108) do not follow a proper diet, 65.8% (N=123) do not protect themselves from the sun, 57.2% (N=107) do not perform mental stimulation [activities], 67.9% (N=127) avoid the use of alcohol and tobacco, 73.8% (N=138) sleep less than 7 hours a day and 89.8% (N=168) do not save money. As for the mistreatment of the elderly population, 60.20% (N=112) do not know elderly people that have suffered mistreatment, 70.40% (N=131) would report violence to the necessary organizations (table 3).

Table 2 – Demonstration of results regarding the attitudes adopted by the university students facing precautions like their own aging process(São Paulo, Brazil, 2012).

	Total	Percent %
You would readily get up or not sit in a preferential seat on public transportation		
Yes	147	78,60
No	40	21,40
You give preference to elderly people boarding public transport		
Yes	119	63,60
No	68	36,40
You do not use the preferential lines for service		
Yes	118	63,10
No	69	36,90
You readily get up from your seat even if the seat is not preferential		
Yes	115	61,50
No	72	38,50
You help carry grocery bags or packages for the elderly that you encounter day to day		
Yes	42	22,50
No	145	77,50
You help the elderly get on the bus and/or read the name of the bus for them		
Yes	124	66,30
No	63	33,70
You regularly practice physical activities		
Yes	65	34,80
No	122	65,20
You follow a proper diet		
Yes	79	42,20
No	108	57,80
You protect yourself from the sun		
Yes	64	34,20
No	123	65,80
You attain mental stimulation developing new abilities/ skills		
Yes	80	42,80
No	107	57,20
You avoid poor life habits such as the use of tobacco and alcohol		
Yes	127	67,90
No	60	32,10
You sleep approximately 7 hours per night		
Yes	49	26,20
No	138	73,80
You save money		
Yes	19	10,20
No	168	89,80
How often do you respect the rights of the elderly?		
Always	131	70,40
Most of the time	54	29,00
Sometimes	1	0,60
Seldom	0	0,00
Never	0	0,00

Table 3 – Regarding the mistreatment of the elderly population (São Paulo, Brazil, 2012).

	Total	Percent %
Do you know some elderly person that has suffered mistreatment?		
Yes	74	39,80
No	112	60,20
What action would you take if faced with a situation in which an elderly person is attacked:		
I would alert the necessary organizations	131	70,40
I would not take any action	2	1,10
I would inform a family member	35	18,80
I would attack the aggressor	16	8,60
None of these options	2	1,10

Discussion

There has been an improvement in the organization, discipline, solidarity, and the ease with which they are able to develop other activities in their lives, therefore, the practice of a sport, in this case, running laps provides, a positive manner, since the sport helps to overcome challenges, helps to acquire new knowledge and brings discipline, or as it were, it must be emphasized that a running practice readapts the individual to day to day situations so that they are flexible when facing situations and difficulties of everyday life⁷.

The promotional health programs of the elderly go along with what is expected and are of great importance, since they represent an effective strategy for improvement in elderly people's quality of life, in general, besides making the elderly protagonists and active decision makers in the choices that determine their state of health and inclusion in a social network, as well as practices of primary health care⁸. The quality of life, the perception of health, symptoms, physical function, psychological function, and social function of independent elderly people that frequent outpatient programs were evaluated utilizing the instrument of the study. The study involved 45 items for evaluation of the cited criteria, and through this evaluation one may obtain facts about what should be given differential attention in cases of interventions for the elderly, both in their status, physical, mental as in their general state⁹.

A study with 100 functionally independent elderly people in which they actually responded to positive and negative issues related to their day to day and there after we obtained the statistical results to consider since then intervention programs, promotional health programs and quality of life¹⁰. Respondents of the present study fear being dependent on other people however as described in the literature it is possible to show evidence that there does exist independent elderly people and that successful aging expressed through good health is possible, providing that, the person were to have good life habits.

In the absence of studies that address the variable of the present study that questions respondents about when they will become elderly, there are no studies that speak about the subject in an isolated form, nevertheless, we observe that it is possible to have a healthy, independent, and enjoyable aging process^{8,9,10,11,17}. The study by Moreira, Alves and Silva characterizes in a quite clear and objective manner the rights of the elderly, a perception of the students about these rights and about old age itself¹².

In the present study the data characterizes the way in which respondents respect the rights of the elderly, afforded positive results 70.40% (N=131) as already previously described, nevertheless, on the applied questionnaire, the interviewees had the option to designate how many answers were thought to be adequate regarding the adopted attitudes in collective transportation and in the daily life habits. Dias and Lima¹⁴ sought cognitive stimulation in the elderly while doing physical activity and thereafter sought proposals for interventions, despite the study being focused on elderly people, the authors highlight that the measurement can be taken for any age group and that the practice would bring innumerable benefits to the individual, nevertheless, it affords for a dignified and successful aging process¹². And the study by Lima MG et al highlights the importance of maintaining adequate life habits, in particular, the reduction of tobacco and alcohol¹³.

As for the variables of the present study that question respondents about which tasks will be more difficult for an elderly person to accomplish 50.30% (N=91) mention extreme sports, however, there are no studies that evaluate such an isolated variable or that at least deal with that subject matter. Consider the hypothesis that there respondents have seen an executed task as being more complex because it is a task that requires a more acute physical and mental

conditioning and the physiological alterations that are provoked by the process of aging could hinder an elderly person in the execution of an activity such as that. Zanon, Alves and Cardenas in their study arrived at the conclusion that there is implicit discrimination in relation to the elderly and the aging process, highlighting the inexistence of activities related to the elderly, convivial and approach with these, suggesting that gerontological education could be added in grade school¹⁵. Caldas valued the aging process from various angles such as health, illness, quality of life, role of family and of caretaker which can guide us in the comprehension of the variable approaches in the present study¹⁵.

Nogueira, Freitas and Almeida aimed to explore the cases of mistreatment and violence against the elderly concluding that, in a majority of cases the attacker resides with the elderly person, the majority is male; children and psychological aggression are very common. This study also suggest that, in these cases, complaints [to authorities] occur; construction of an integrated data base; articulation and strengthening of a social safety net; training of professionals; educational campaigns about aging; orientations with families and legal penalties of those responsible for the violence¹⁶. The result of this study has parallel findings and the results already described. The variable in which an interviewee is approached about violence against the elderly, and that which interferes with elderly people's quality of life, interviewees responded that, elderly people's quality of life in some cases, is interfered with by the lack of respect given to them by other people, which we have already seen that they can be shown [a lack of respect] by their own children and persons that live in the same residence, nevertheless, the study Gvozd and Delarosa demonstrated positive coexistence of the subjects with the elderly¹⁷.

Final Considerations

The results suggest that the interviewed participants of the study, all university students in the health (physical therapy, nursing and psychology programs), field possess negative preconceptions about the aging process itself; never the less, they respect the rights of the elderly, although they do not possess adequate life habits, which could make their aging process healthy and successful. It was also observed that despite the fact that the general perception of aging was shown to be negative; respondents believe that the elderly do not suffer impactions that impede the accomplishment of any and all tasks. It is suggested, in conclusion, that academics have a deeper understanding about the importance of maintaining heal thier life habits and their importance in having a healthy and successful aging process.

Bibliographic References

1. Mancia JR, Portela VCC, Viecili R. A Imagem dos acadêmicos de enfermagem a cerca do próprio envelhecimento. Rev Bras Enferm. Brasília 2008; 61(2): 221-6.
2. Veras R. Vida plena sem violência na maturidade: A busca contemporânea. Ciência & Saúde Coletiva, 2010; 15(6): 2669-2676.
3. Lima AMM, Silva HS, Galhardoni R. Envelhecimento bem-sucedido: Trajetórias de um constructo e novas fronteiras. Interface – Comunic., Saúde, Educ., 2008; 12(27): 795-807
4. Veras RP. Experiências e tendências internacionais de modelos de cuidado para com o idoso. Ciência e Saúde Coletiva, 2012; 17(1): 231-238.
5. Montanholi LL, Tavares DMS, Oliveira GR, Simões ALA. Ensino sobre idoso e gerontologia: Visão do discente de enfermagem no estado de Minas Gerais. Contexto Enferm, Florianópolis, 2006; 15(4): 663-71.
6. Carvalho CRA, Hennington ÉA. A abordagem do envelhecimento na formação universitária dos profissionais de saúde: uma revisão integrativa. Rev. bras. geriatr. gerontol. 2015 Jun; 18(2): 417-31.
7. Almeida S. Envelhecimento bem sucedido e as aprendizagens no esporte competitivo: Uma forma de adaptação de atletas que praticam corrida. Rev. Bras. Geriatr. Gerontol., Rio de Janeiro, 2011; 14(2): 233-239.
8. Araujo LF, Coelho CG, Mendonça ET, Vaz AVM, Batista RS, Cotta RMM. Evidências da contribuição dos programas de assistência ao idoso na promoção do envelhecimento saudável no Brasil. Rev. Panam Salud Publica, 2011; 30(1): 80-86.
9. Lima MJB, Portela MC. Elaboração e avaliação da confiabilidade de um instrumento para medição da qualidade de vida relacionada à saúde de idosos independentes. Cad. Saúde Pública, 2010; 26(18): 1651-1662.
10. Ferreira OGL, Maciel SC, Silva AO, Santos WS, Moreira MASP. O envelhecimento ativo sob o olhar de idosos funcionalmente independentes. Rev Esc Enferm USP 2010; 44(4): 1065-9.

11. Moreira RS, Alves MSC, Silva AO. Percepção dos estudantes sobre o idoso e seus direitos. Rev Gaucha de Enferm., 2009; 30(4): 685-91.
12. Dias MS, Lima RM. Estimulação cognitiva por meio de atividades físicas em idosas: Examinando uma proposta de intervenção. Rev. Bras. Geriatr. Gerontol., 2012; 15(2): 325-334
13. Lima MG, Barros MBA, Cesar CLG, Goldbaum M, Carandina L, Alves MCGP. Health-related behavior and quality of life among the elderly: a population-based study. Rev Saúde Pública 2011; 45(3): 485-93.
14. Zanon CBFM, Alves VP, Cardenas CJ. Como vai a educação gerontológica nas escolas públicas do Distrito Federal? Um estudo com idosos e jovens. Rev. Bras. Geriatr. Gerontol., 2011; 14(3): 555-566.
15. Caldas C. Vários olhares sobre o envelhecimento. Rev. Bras. Geriatr. Gerontol., Rio de Janeiro 2011; 14(2): 195-196
16. Nogueira CF, Freitas MC, Almeida PC. Violência contra idoso no município de Fortaleza, CE: Uma análise documental. Rev. Bras. Geriatr. Gerontol., Rio de Janeiro 2011; 14(3): 543-554
17. Gvozd R, Dellaroza MSG. Velhice e a relação com os idosos: O olhar de adolescentes do ensino fundamental. Rev. Bras. Geriatr. Gerontol., Rio de Janeiro, 2012; 15(2): 295-304).

Gisele Ferreira Chaves

Endereço para correspondência – Rua: Pari, n° 50, Bairro: Jardim São Lucas, CEP: 06730-000, Vargem Grande Paulista, São Paulo, SP, Brasil.

E-mail: giselechaves.fisio@gmail.com

Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/1515161651806183>

Rafaela Sanches de Oliveira – rafaela_sanches@yahoo.com.br

Renato Ribeiro Nogueira Ferraz – renatobio@hotmail.com

Eliziane Nitz de Carvalho Calvi – fisioeliziane@yahoo.com.br

Enviado em 07 de maio de 2015.

Aceito em 16 de setembro de 2015.