Free Communications

That's my hour': Postmenopausal womens' experiences of an exercise intervention

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Exercise has many physiological and psychosocial benefits for postmenopausal women. Previous research has shown that sedentary postmenopausal women of North Queensland perceive a number of barriers to exercise, however, when they are given the right opportunity to exercise they perceive it as a positive experience. The aim of this study was to explore the exercise intervention experiences of postmenopausal women living in North Queensland immediately following participation and at 18-months follow up.

Thirty three previously sedentary postmenopausal women (mean age 62.24 ± 6.77 years) volunteered to participate in an 8-week intervention consisting of a 60 minute group-based circuit style session three times per week. The circuit included a combination of aerobic & resistance exercises to music. Twenty-six women completed the 8-week program. Focus groups were conducted post-intervention and interviews conducted with the women who had maintained the exercise regime at 18-months follow up. Focus groups and interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim by an independent reviewer and analysed thematically.

A number of themes emerged from the focus groups and interviews. As a result of the exercise intervention, the participants felt greater motivation and confidence; enjoyed the shared experiences, support and acceptance and felt better physically, functionally, socially and emotionally. The participants felt that the facilitator was crucial in their exercise behaviour change. Of the 26 women who completed the intervention, 11 had sustained the exercise regime at 18-months follow up. This study has shown that previously sedentary postmenopausal women can successfully change and maintain their exercise behaviour given the right opportunity.