

Introduction

- Older adults (OAs) over the age of 65 are the fastest growing age group in the United States (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2015).
- The OA population is the fastest growing population of Internet users as they use the internet to access health information related to optimizing independence, productivity and social engagement (Wagner, Hassanein, & Head, 2010; Harrod, 2010).
- There is an abundant amount of information available that is devoted to optimizing the quality of life (QoL) and well being of OAs, however, the validity of the information can be questionable and the information may be too difficult to understand (Ayati & Azarani, 2014).
- A needs assessment based on literature indicated the importance of access to topics related to emotional and physical wellness and promoting a safe and active lifestyle in and outside of the home.

Purpose

- The Dominican University of California (DUC) Healthy Aging website was developed in 2014 with the objective of providing resources and current research about healthy aging.
- The project supplemented the current website with evidence-based information and strategies to encourage the development of new healthy habits.
- Material was incorporated into the website with attention to usability and readability to ensure that it can be viewed by anyone, including OAs in the community and health profession majors.

Literature Review

- Aging may affect home situations, occupational functioning, long-term care and quality of life. OAs may benefit from information about how to enhance their occupational functioning and life satisfaction (Horowitz, et al, 2013).
- Home modifications may improve the lives of OAs and allow them to participate safely in everyday tasks (Petersson, Kottorp, Bergström & Lilja, 2009). Home modifications promote independence, reduce functional difficulties, increase safety, and improve self-efficacy in self care tasks (Gitlin, et al., 2006).
- Educating OAs on safe driving techniques will promote independence and social opportunities in the community (Golisz, 2014).
- Achieving psychosocial well being is essential for OAs as it influences their ability to maintain their health, well being, and QoL (NAPHA, 2015).
- Participation in social activities increases life satisfaction by reducing negative affect and producing positive emotions in OAs (Simone & Haas, 2013).
- OAs are at risk of computer related injuries. Ergonomic education is useful in preventing upper extremity and musculoskeletal disorders among computer users (Esmaelizadeh, et al., 2012).

Project Implementation

The DUC Healthy Aging website provided its users with:

Living Safely Inside & Outside of the Home

- A home safety checklist link
- Home modification tips to ensure safety in their home
- Resources and tips for safe driving

Emotional Wellness

- Coping mechanisms to educate OAs on techniques for dealing with stress and anxiety.
- Information on positive thinking, coping well, engaging in activities of interest, social participation, and self-management of health care.
- Resources and information on social events within their community and facts about how engagement affects emotional wellness.

At Your Fingertips

- A list of local technological services and their locations for OAs
- Step by step instructions on how to increase font and sound functions to encourage computer literacy in OAs.

Apps You Can Use

- Descriptions and links to apps on the Apple store or Google store for smartphones and tablets to promote independence and lifestyle improvements while staying cognitively active and engaged.

Position, Movement & Ergonomics

- User friendly suggestions for easy, safe and injury free use of technology.

Local Events

- Provides users with direct access to the Marin County calendar to discover new information about current community events.

Implications For Practice

- Occupational therapists are well positioned to design communications that foster productive aging.
- Productive aging has been recognized by the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) as a key area of practice due to the rapidly aging population and QoL issues (American Occupational Therapy Association {AOTA} 2015).
- The DUC Healthy Aging website provides an opportunity to communicate current evidence based health promotion material that is focused on being interactive, and being user friendly.
- The DUC Healthy Aging website is beneficial to OAs, students, professors, and practitioners in the healthcare field. Web users have access to evidence based resources and information about health promotion and preventative measures to live a healthy active lifestyle.

Conclusion

This project focuses on expanding the DUC website by introducing new information and resources regarding health promotion strategies to keep OAs emotionally and physically well. Evidenced based factors and practical suggestions were implemented for OAs in order to improve QoL. The website is highly accessible and older adults will be able to maintain their health and independence by using recommendations for resources that can assist them inside and outside of their home. The website can also help OAs adapt and modify aspects of their lives.

Visit the Healthy Aging Website

<http://www.dominican.edu/academics/hns/ot/healthyaging>

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