

## ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION IN ELDERLY PEOPLE IN THE MIDWEST OF CATARINA

---

***Rafaela Parizoto Corrêa***

Universidade do Alto do Vale do Rio do  
Peixe – Uniarp  
Caçador – SC  
<https://lattes.cnpq.br/4681958797872928>

***Ana Julia Sartori Ramos***

Universidade do Alto do Vale do Rio do  
Peixe – Uniarp  
Caçador – SC  
<http://lattes.cnpq.br/8192951275915611>

***Thaís Rigon***

Atitus Educação  
Passo Fundo – RS  
<http://lattes.cnpq.br/8257601812052212>

***João Mateus Marocco***

Universidade do Alto do Vale do Rio do  
Peixe – Uniarp  
Caçador – SC  
<https://lattes.cnpq.br/6609616003529751>

***Ilka Isabela Celuppi***

Universidade do Contestado - UNC  
Concórdia – SC  
<https://orcid.org/0009-0001-7019-3384>

***Cristine Vanz Borges***

Universidade do Alto do Vale do Rio do  
Peixe – Uniarp  
Caçador – SC  
<http://lattes.cnpq.br/5689703694600858>

All content in this magazine is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution License. Attribution-Non-Commercial-Non-Derivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0).



**Abstract:** Anxiety and Depression Disorder in older people is found at statistically higher levels than in the young adult population. In this research, we sought to relate such diseases and their complications with the frequency of physical activities and the benefits that physical exercises can promote in helping to treat mental illnesses. The research carried out is an exploratory study based on scientific articles indexed in the Virtual Health Library (VHL). The search for the scientific literature was carried out in order to correlate the theme Mental Health and the Practice of Physical Activities. After reading the title and abstract, articles that best approached the proposed objectives were selected. In a second moment, an extensionist action was applied at UBS São Miguel and at a nursing home in the city of Fraiburgo, SC. As a strategy for action in health education, explanatory posters were used and pamphlets were distributed to participants. When reviewing the scientific literature, the inverse relationship between physical exercise and mental disorders was observed. Concomitantly, in the places where the extensionist action was applied, there was a significant prevalence of signs of depression and anxiety in the elderly population that was sedentary, corroborating the bibliographic search.

**Keywords:** Aging. Mental health. Physical exercise.

## INTRODUCTION

Major depressive disorder (MDD) and generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) are highly prevalent clinical conditions, often associated with loss of quality of life and functionality. The high incidence of MDD and GAD draws attention and raises concern because these disorders constitute a serious public health problem, having repercussions on a person's general health, in addition to generating psychosocial consequences, including changes

in sleep, mood, weight, psychomotor agitation or slowness, lack of concentration, fatigue or loss of energy, feelings of worthlessness and guilt and suicidal ideation (BRUNONI et al., 2015).

The prevalence of depression in Brazil, estimated using the Patient Health Questionnaire, indicates that the southern region of the country had the highest value. In addition, there are also estimates that groups at greater risk of major depression in the Brazilian population are those with lower educational level, heart disease and women (GONÇALVES et al., 2018).

Progressively, studies investigate the presence of depressive and anxious symptoms in the elderly. Specific groups of elderly people have higher rates of depressive and anxious symptoms: patients with chronic diseases, in which the prevalence can reach 25%; and, institutionalized elderly, whose variance is from 25 to 50% (GUIMARÃES et al., 2019).

The high incidence of anxiety and depression in the elderly and the importance of physical exercises in the treatment of these illnesses were chosen as the theme of this work, as there are many elderly people with anxiety and depression in the population served by UBS São Miguel in Fraiburgo (SC).

Furthermore, this was selected because many do not consider anxiety and depression to be illnesses and think that they do not exist. However, they exist and must be treated with therapy or with a combination of therapy and medication, depending on the severity of the situation. The practice of physical exercises is also fundamental and can help in the treatment of anxiety and depression.

In addition, the relevance of this topic is very great, because according to the World Health Organization (WHO), Brazil is the most anxious country in the world (2019) and one of the leaders in cases of depression. Therefore, the objective of this study was to

understand the high rate of depression and anxiety in the elderly and how the practice of physical exercises can help in their treatment.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The present study is an exploratory research and an experience report of a health action developed by the academics of the SBE II discipline of the 2nd phase of the Medicine course at ``Universidade Alto Vale do Rio do Peixe`` (UNIARP), together with patients at the Basic Health Unit (UBS) in São Miguel de Fraiburgo (SC).

Because it is an experience report, the study did not go through the ethics committee. However, authorization was previously requested from the Basic Health Unit (UBS) team to carry out the action. The data of the participants were not disclosed, respecting the norms recommended by Resolution 466/2012 of the National Council of Ethics in Research (CONEP).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The data obtained through this study were done through a bibliographical research on the Virtual Health Library (VHL) website. Therefore, anxiety and depression disorders constitute a global health challenge, causing a high level of mortality and morbidity and negatively affecting the health system due to its costs (TEIXEIRA et al., 2013). Depression, in addition to impairing several aspects of a patient's routine, impacts on monetary expenses, which directly impacts on their quality of life (BRUNONI et al., 2015).

According to the article Comparison of levels of anxiety and depression between active and sedentary elderly from the Instituto Piaget Enxerim, Portugal (MINGUELLI et al., 2013) the levels of anxiety and/or depression and the practice of physical exercise present an inverse relationship. These data are in line with several studies that found that

exercise promotes a reduction in anxiety and depression symptoms.

The decrease in symptoms of anxiety and depression through the practice of physical exercise can be explained by the increase in the release of hormones such as catecholamines, ACTH, vasopressin,  $\beta$ -endorphin, dopamine, serotonin and by the activation of specific receptors and decrease in blood viscosity, providing a tranquilizing and analgesic effect, obtaining a post-effort relaxing result. Serotonin can decrease the formation of fear-related memories and reduce responses to threatening events through serotonergic projections that depart from the raphe nucleus to the hippocampus (MINGUELLI et al., 2013).

The lowest level of education was observed more frequently in individuals with the presence of anxiety and/or depression, this factor being more frequent in the elderly in the sedentary group. In fact, the variable "level of education" has shown to have an influence on the existence of anxiety and/or depression, reaching 11 times greater in individuals with no education, as verified in studies carried out by GAZALLE et al. (2004). In the group of active elderly, the lower levels of anxiety and/or depression observed compared to the sedentary group may have been attributed not only to the physiological benefits of physical exercise, but also to the practice itself, which was carried out in a group, contributing to the implementation of social relationships. Several studies indicate that the variables practical physical exercises and level of education have shown to influence the development of levels of anxiety and/or depression in the elderly (MINGUELLI et al., 2013; GAZALLE et al., 2004).

During the action developed in the present study, in conversation with the participants, the sociodemographic bias was analyzed, which found that the vast majority belong to

the lower class, being closely associated with their quality of life. Furthermore, it was found that most of the elderly at Casa Lar OPA and OMA were bedridden, a fact that makes it impossible for them to perform physical exercises, which can also infer anxiety and depression. This way, several elderly people with anxious and depressive symptoms were analyzed and guidance was given on how to seek help during the application of the action. That is, there was a possible inversely proportional relationship between the practice of physical exercises and the prevalence of mental disorders, that is, when physical exercise was present, the levels of anxiety and/or depression were lower, as verified in the exploratory research initially carried out.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The present study evaluated the incidence of mental disorders, such as anxiety and depression, in the elderly. Thus, the sociodemographic bias was analyzed, which found that financial condition is closely associated with quality of life. Schooling is also an influencing factor in the appearance of depressive and anxious symptoms, and the lower the schooling, the greater the chance of developing these mental illnesses. Still, depression, anxiety and physical exercises are inversely proportional, because in the presence of physical exercises there is an absence of mental disorders. This happens due to the presence of hormones released in the practice of physical exercises, which act directly on specific receptors. Therefore, elderly people who are more socially vulnerable are more likely to develop anxiety and depression, and physical exercise is a way of preventing and treating these mental disorders.

## REFERENCES

- CORREA, André Ricardo et al. EXERCÍCIO FÍSICO E OS TRANSTORNOS DE ANSIEDADE E DEPRESSÃO. *Revista Faculdades do Saber*, v. 7, n. 14, p. 10721078, 2022.
- GAZALLE F, LIMA M, TAVARES B, HALLAL P. Sintomas depressivos e fatores associados em população idosa no Sul do Brasil. *Rev Saude Publica*, v. 38, p. 36571, 2004.
- GONÇALVES, Angela Maria Corrêa et al. Prevalência de depressão e fatores associados em mulheres atendidas pela Estratégia de Saúde da Família. *Jornal Brasileiro de Psiquiatria*, v. 67, p. 101-109, 2018.
- GUIMARÃES, Lara de Andrade et al. Sintomas depressivos e fatores associados em idosos residentes em instituição de longa permanência. *Ciência & Saúde Coletiva*, v. 24, p. 3275-3282, 2019.
- LELIS, Karen de Cássia Gomes et al. Sintomas de depressão, ansiedade e uso de medicamentos em universitários. *Revista Portuguesa de Enfermagem de Saúde Mental*, n. 23, p. 9-14, 2020.
- MINGHELLI, Beatriz et al. Comparação dos níveis de ansiedade e depressão entre idosos ativos e sedentários. *Escola Superior de Saúde Jean Piaget de Algarve – Instituto Piaget Enxerim*, p. 71-76, 2013.