166 - KARATE IN OLD AGE: A NEW POSSIBILITY

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INTRODUCTION

Our society is in constant evolution, and subjects that arouse concern change every moment as population, their needs and interests change. Thanks to the advances in science we have achieved longevity, but we know that growing old with dignity, health and autonomy is more important than having a prolonged existence. According to some studies, in Brazil through the last 20 years there's been a 107% raise in the number of individuals over the age of 60, what shows the need for searching mechanisms which aim to satisfy the needs of this population, so deprived from preventive actions related to their health and quality of life. It emerges, therefore, the need for making the elderly aware of the practical importance of sports and physical activities, regardless of previous experiences.

Sports practice is not common among the elderly, for the ones who are involved in sports activities are few, restricting it to those who practice one kind of sport throughout their lives.

Thus, when proposing sports practice for elderly, it's fundamental to establish a gradual process of approximation to sport, hence the importance of adapted sports.

Working as a volunteer in the “Biggest Age in movement” Extension Project from Centro Universitário Feevale, I had my first contact with physical activities adapted for people in aging process.

The purpose of this project was to provide physical activities to the elderly with the objective of improving their functional ability, preventing and assisting in the treatment of pathologies, strengthening disposition, ability and confidence to deal with everyday life.

Observing and interacting with the elderly during adapted activities, has made various questions possible for me: If today there's the possibility of our seniors to practice various sports categories adapted to their capabilities, why not to adapt a martial art? Since, besides being an undergraduate in Physical Education Course, I was skilled in Karate. And, when adapting technical movements in a way that they can be used by elderly individuals, could Karate become another option for healthy and fun physical activity for them? If in old China's *Kung fu*, Karate's ancestor, we discover the most remote antecedent of medical gymnastics. It was based in the use of certain positions, of a series of breathing exercises and movements from a ritual prescribed by priests for the relief of pain and other symptoms.

When suggesting the possibility of practicing Karate in old age, there wasn't any surprise when many people said “I'm too old to practice Karate, to start with”. For the majority, maybe it wasn't even a hypothesis, but a definitive axiom. Unfortunately, we live in a time when one lives drowned in frivolities and irrelevances and the idea of changing some paradigms or concepts almost always ends up with disconsolate, slow and pitiful shrugging shoulders.

From then on, living with the group started to have several purposes among them, to interact with the elderly with the intention of getting familiar with their language and also knowing their limitations and possibilities, aiming it to the adaptation of technical movements according to their physical conditions, what could make the planning of the activities proposed during the study easier. Another intention was to facilitate the participation of subjects in the research, for, since it was an innovative proposal, it could be rejected, preventing its accomplishment.

This investigation aimed to provide a new view on martial arts and their possibilities as a factor in health and quality of life.

METHODOLOGY

This research has characterized itself in a qualitative, descriptive and interpretative approach, in which the collaborators were elderly people with ages from 61 to 79 years old, six (6) females and three (3) males. Among collaborators, although they were not sedentary, we've found various people with pathologies (in the group there was a diabetic male, a female with cardiac prosthesis (aortic valve) and one more that has been though a radical mastectomy). The decision of inviting this group to take part in the research, occurred because of the observation made during their practice of adapted sports activities, considering that the elected ones were relevant for clarifying the studied subject, because they showed availability and, mostly, for demonstrating interest to participate in the research. The field of study selected was Centro Universitário Feevale (Campus I) from Novo Hamburgo, RS.

A qualitative approach was chosen, for the proximity character between investigator and participants was understood in this investigation. For this investigation we used the following instruments: participatory observations, registered properly on a field diary, semi-structured interviews with the collaborators and collection of documents which could contribute with relevant information. The choice for procedures and instruments utilized in the collection of information was made considering the coherence with the delimitations of the research and the achievement of characteristics of the investigation problem. The choice for participatory observation is justified in this study because it allows a real immersion in the environment to be studied and this is maybe one of the most representative factors in the utilization of this instrument for it allowed for being present at events, behaviors, verbal and non-verbal expressions, actions and interactions of the collaborators involved in the phenomenon studied, so that, subsequently, it was possible to record and describe them. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with collaborators after twenty (20) adapted karate interventions/lessons which happened between August 20th and October 19th 2007. The adapted karate lessons/interventions occurred in three schedules a week, considering that the collaborators have promised to attend at least two lessons in a week.

The interviews were individual and performed in a close environment, conserving this way, the collaborators' tranquility and privacy.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

It was interesting to observe the elderly starting to practice Karate, the way they faced the same difficulties of younger people. However, the aims were others, and as older people have more elevated attention levels and structured personalities, surely this has made all the difference.

Adapting technical moves from Karate, so that it could be practiced by elderly, demanded an activities program, in which aims and contents would gather the basic requirements to reflect it in an improvement of elderly people's physical and intellectual ability. The proposed activities weren't limited pure and simply to repetition and mechanization of techniques, but exercises and games that made the collaborator pay attention to and memorize a series of movements (Kata), to learn some rules and adapt movement according to situation. The aim was that, when performing the activities, the elderly had the possibility of experimenting, analyzing and deciding the move and that they could find motor solutions to the proposed situations.

Various factors have led the elderly to have a disposition to practice a sports activity. It was clear that the most important is that they find a personal interest and be aware of the need of physical activity. Thus, they're going to be motivated and they're going to perform the activity periodically. The motivation is going to keep them from abandoning the activity, since every human behavior needs to be motivated so there's effort and assiduity in its practice. The curiosity in experiencing a different and little known sports practice, linked to the invitation of friends and teachers, were relevant facts in the decision of participating in the project for the majority of collaborators.

Some collaborators stated, in various moments, that they've never imagined it was possible to adapt Karate in a way that it could be practiced by older people, because the information they had about the referred subject asserted that it was a kind of brutal combat, capable of causing devastating damages to the opponent and even lead him or her to death. Unfortunately, Karate is still stigmatized as a violent sport, and many people believe that the ones who practice it are there just to get involved in fights. The great majority of population doesn't have knowledge about this noble art and doesn't know that it can be practiced according to each individual's aims and abilities.

In the interviews, it was possible to perceive that many elderly are still considered as ridiculous for being active and being ready to accept challenges like, for instance, practicing some sport, even though it's adapted. It was evident that sports practice in old age is still a taboo for many people, including the families of many elderly people and, many times, the elderly judge themselves as being incapable of learning new sports categories; but, once shame and fear of the unknown vanish and they decide to try it and start up a new sport, this becomes an unforgettable experience.

We know that many factors interfere direct or indirectly with the good functioning of intellectual abilities of human beings in aging process, but we know for sure that the higher is the older person's quality of life, his capacity to prevent possible alterations is going to be bigger.

Starting from the development of the research, new knowledge was arising, raising in me a wider perception about this stage in life which, certainly, sooner or later, everyone of us will have to experience. In this sense, it made possible for me to understand clearly, the role adapted sports categories represent in elderly people's everyday life. In the questions referring to this investigation's results, the perceptions of collaborators confirm it in the sense that there was a positive occurrence in results, what may be noticed in various elderly people's accounts; self-confidence, self-esteem, balance, attention, improvement in motor coordination and valuing what one can achieve. I believe that it's our task to educate the elderly in this aspect, help them to create habits for practicing physical activity, besides encouraging them to have confidence in their body and the consciousness that they can learn and participate in the proposed activities, that is, that they're capable people.

The results obtained from this research project indicate that practicing karate, even after seventy, can be an excellent way of counterbalancing the decline of diverse functions and organs, moderating aging within the physical, psychological and social spheres. It is also capable of keeping us constantly on alert, in learning process and consequently, in evolution.

Thus, I believe that this research will provide discussions, going deeper into ideas and confrontation of theme's subject matters as for the question of Karate as a sport which can be practiced by people in old age.

Key words: People in old age, Karatê, Quality of life.

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Key words: People in old age, Karatê, Quality of life.

KARATÉ DANS LE TROISIÈME ÂGE: UNE NOUVELLE POSSIBILITÉ

Cette étude a pour objectif d'identifier d'un projet de karaté comme une possibilité d'activité physique pour les personnes âgées public. Cette fonction de recherche est une approche qualitative, descriptif et interprétatif, et les employés étaient âgés de personnes âgées entre 61 et 79 ans. Le domaine de l'étude a été de l'Université Feevale Center (Campus I) de Novo Hamburgo, RS. L'adaptation technique des mouvements de karaté, de sorte qu'il pourrait être fait par les personnes âgées,

exigé un program d'activité, dans laquelle les objectifs et le contenu répondent aux exigences de base de mettre l'accent sur l'amélioration des capacités physiques et intellectuelles des personnes âgées. Les activités ne se limitent pas purement et simplement une répétition de techniques et de la mécanisation, mais les exercices et les jeux qui exigent de l'employé d'être conscient et de se rappeler une série de mouvements, d'apprendre certaines règles et d'adapter le mouvement en fonction de la situation. Les résultats de ce projet de recherche indiquent que la pratique du karaté, même après la soixante ans peut être un excellent moyen pour contrer le déclin de différentes fonctions et organes, le vieillissement de ramollissement domaines relevant de la physique, psychologique et social.

Palavras clés: personnes âgées, le karaté, la qualité de la vie

KARATE EN LA TERCERA EDAD: UNA NUEVA POSIBILIDAD

Este estudio tiene el objetivo de identificar a partir de un proyecto de karate como una posibilidad de que la actividad física para las personas de edad avanzada. Esta función de búsqueda es un enfoque cualitativo, descriptivo e interpretativo, y los empleados son personas mayores con edades comprendidas entre los 61 y 79 años. El campo de diseño del estudio fue el Centro Universitario Feevale (Campus I) de Novo Hamburgo, RS. La adaptación técnica de los movimientos de Karate, a fin de que se podría hacer por las personas de edad avanzada, exigió un programa de actividad, en la que los objetivos y el contenido cumplen los requisitos básicos para un enfoque sobre el mejoramiento de capacidades físicas e intelectuales de las personas de edad avanzada. Las actividades no se limitan pura y simplemente una repetición de las técnicas y la mecanización, pero los ejercicios y juegos que requieren el trabajador a ser conscientes y recordar una serie de movimientos, aprender algunas reglas y adaptar el movimiento. Los resultados de este proyecto de investigación indican que la práctica de karate, incluso después de la sesenta años pueden ser una excelente manera de contrarrestar la disminución de los diversos órganos y funciones, ablandamiento el envejecimiento de los campos dentro de la física, psicológica y social.

Palavras clave: Ancianos, el Karate, la calidad de vida

KARATÊ NA TERCEIRA IDADE: UMA NOVA POSSIBILIDADE

O presente estudo possui o objetivo de identificar a partir de um projeto de karatê como uma possibilidade de atividade física para o público idoso. Esta pesquisa caracterizou-se numa abordagem qualitativa, descritiva e interpretativa, e os colaboradores eram idosos com idades entre 61 e 79 anos. O campo de estudo adotado foi o Centro Universitário Feevale (Campus I) de Novo Hamburgo, RS. Adaptar movimentos técnicos do Karatê, para que o mesmo pudesse ser praticado por idosos, exigiu um programa de atividades, no qual os objetivos e conteúdos reunissem os requisitos básicos para incidir em uma melhora das capacidades físicas e intelectuais dos idosos. As atividades não se limitaram pura e simplesmente à repetição e a mecanização de técnicas, mas de exercícios e jogos que obrigavam o colaborador a estar atento e memorizar uma série de movimentos, aprenderem algumas regras e adaptar o movimento de acordo com a situação. Os resultados obtidos a partir deste projeto de pesquisa indicam que praticar karatê mesmo que após os sessenta anos pode ser um excelente meio de contrariar o declínio das diversas funções e órgãos, atenuando o envelhecimento dentro dos domínios físico, psicológico e social.

Palavras-chave: Idosos, Karatê, Qualidade de Vida