

Menopausal women: perceiving continuous power through the experience of regular exercise.

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BACKGROUND: Menopausal women are at high risk for cardiovascular diseases and osteoporosis. However, for so long, women have devoted much of their time and energy to family, children, and work such that they could not regularly exercise. There are few studies addressing the experiences of Taiwanese women who regularly exercise.

OBJECTIVES: The aim of this study was to explore the experiences of regularly exercising, defined as thoughts or actions by menopausal women who did not regularly exercise before menopause, but who now exercise regularly.

DESIGN: A grounded theory research design was used.

METHODS: In-depth interviews were undertaken with a purposive sampling of 12 menopausal women who began to do regular exercises after menopause and who have continued exercising for more than 6 months. The constant comparative method was used to analyse the interview data.

RESULTS: 'Perceiving Continuous Power' was the core category during the process of regularly exercising. Every participating woman perceived that her body and mind were filled with continuous power including the subcategories of 'Overcoming the initial discomfort', 'Experiencing Benefits to Body and Mind' and 'Broadening' during the process. 'Awareness of Health Crisis', which included the subcategories of 'Cureless Chronic Disease', 'Mood Swings', and 'Conflict on Medication', was identified as occurring when these women first began regularly exercising. Throughout the process of perceiving continuous power, women experienced the following interactive behaviour categories: 'Exercise Selection' with subcategories of 'Self-Evaluation', 'Seeking and Fitting', 'Comparing' and 'Health Becoming' with the subcategories of 'Releasing Health Crisis', 'Regaining Flowering Life', and 'Self-Fulfilling'.

CONCLUSIONS: Regular exercises provided continuous power for menopausal women.

RELEVANCE TO CLINICAL PRACTICE: The experiences with exercise we uncovered in this study can provide a reference for nurses to guide menopausal women with their regular exercise plans.