

Old Dogs Can Learn New Tricks: Exploring Effective Strategies to Facilitate Somatosensory Video Games for Institutionalized Older Veterans*

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Abstract. The purpose of the study is to explore the possibility of utilizing somatosensory video games (SVGs) to promote institutionalized older veterans to participate regular exercises in senior institutions. A total of 58 participants (82.4±4.1 years) were voluntarily willingly to participate this study in Taoyuan Veterans Home, Taiwan. Veterans aged 75 years or older, without physical disabilities and visual impairments that may interfere with the accessibility of playing the game, were recruited to participate. Exclusion criteria were also executed to ensure their safety and to decrease the drop-out rate of participation. Individuals with wheelchair, having plans for travel or extended leave of absence, intensive hospital care, or enrolling in other exercise/rehabilitation programs were excluded with euphemistic explanation. Twenty-three veterans (mean age=82.4 years, SD=3.9, range=77~91) were selected and voluntarily completed 30-minute Wii Fit Plus (Taiwan Edition) for 3 time/wk for 8 weeks. Participation observation and informal conversation were two major qualitative research methods to collect responses and feedback of veterans who participants SVGs, co-workers, and facilitators. Constant comparison was utilized to analyze the qualitative information with QSR Nvivo7. The results identified that immediately feedback, competition, companionship, challenges, close to grandchild and fun are six main reasons to attract older veterans to keep involved with SVGs. Additionally, adding extra workload for staff, no interest in high-tech, game control/operation and amotivations for learning new things are four challenges to promote SVGs. The finding showed that SVGs are viable way to attract institutionalized older veterans to participate physical activities. However, further individualized programs and assistance in control and selections are needed to continue their involvement. The study implicates that enjoyment, social interaction and flow experience are keys to develop successful SVGs sessions for institutionalized older veterans.

Keywords: somatosensory video game, Wii Fit Plus, Elderly, leisure, recreation, health promotion, balance, technology, aging, aged, physical activity.

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