

# Letters to the Editor

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## Encouraging Physical Activity Among Frail Older Persons

**Original Article:** Physical Activity Guidelines for Older Adults

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TO THE EDITOR: In their article, Drs. Elsayy and Higgins present useful information on the positive impact of physical activity in older adults. The authors also recommend strategies that physicians can employ to help older adults become more active and, therefore, healthier. A few additional points can be made on this topic.

First, it is important to realize that physical activity is essential for health and wellness promotion in patients of all ages, including those who are older and frail. A structured fitness program for frail older persons can maintain or improve physical function and prevent loss of independence by preserving activities of daily living.

Although few studies have explored the effects of physical activity in older persons, one study examined the effects of moderate- or high-intensity exercise on physical frailty in older persons (more than 80 percent of participants were wheelchair-bound).<sup>1</sup> The study found that persons in the exercise group had greater improvement in functional activity than those in the control group.

Second, several strategies can be used to encourage physical activity in frail older persons. Exercises should be innovative, fun, social, and sustainable. For example, at the

Atlanta Veterans Affairs Medical Center, veterans who reside in the community living center (nursing home) have access to a Nintendo Wii gaming system. This system has gained popularity in long-term care settings, because the actions are intuitive and easy for residents to do. The residents enjoy the virtual competitive sports, such as tennis and bowling, which permit physical activity and socializing at the same time. Some of these activities are also suitable for those who are wheelchair-bound.<sup>2</sup>

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## REFERENCES

1. Meuleman JR, Brechue WF, Kubilis PS, Lowenthal DT. Exercise training in the debilitated aged: strength and functional outcomes. *Arch Phys Med Rehabil*. 2000;81(3):312-318.
2. Wii isn't just for kids [video]. CNN. <http://www.cnn.com/video/#/video/health/2009/04/19/video.game.helps.vets.rehab.cnn?iref=24hours>. Accessed January 11, 2010.

## Correction

In the article, "Management of COPD Exacerbations," (March 1, 2010, page 607) the brand name for methylprednisolone administered intravenously was incorrectly listed as Depo-Medrol in the first sentence of the third paragraph in the right-hand column of page 609 and in the last column of *Table 5* (page 611). The brand name that should have been listed for intravenous methylprednisolone is Solu-Medrol. Depo-Medrol is the brand name of the long-acting intramuscular formulation. The article has been corrected online. ■