Arthritis-Friendly Trail Assessment for Seattle Parks and Recreation

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INTRODUCTION
Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) identified a need to make their programs more accessible to individuals who are “aging out” of existing programs. To address this need, SPR received a grant from the Osteoarthritis Action Alliance to enhance their Lifelong Recreation programming for aging adults with osteoarthritis (OA). The purpose of this project was to create new opportunities for physical activity for this population that complement current SPR programming.

BACKGROUND

What is OA?
- OA is a leading cause of disability and is characterized by the loss of cartilage in joints, causing pain, swelling, and stiffness
- Increased age is a significant risk factor for developing OA
- Common co-morbid conditions include: depression, obesity, diabetes, and heart disease

Why is physical activity important for OA?
- Physical activity improves function, self-efficacy, and quality of life while decreasing pain, depressive symptoms, and fatigue
- Research shows that walking outdoors is a good form of physical activity because:
  - It is low impact, safe for those previously inactive, and presents low risk for musculoskeletal injury
  - It enhances mood and promotes exercise adherence
- Outdoor trails are available according to individual schedules and at no cost

What is available in Seattle?
- Seattle Parks and Recreation manages over 6,200 acres of parkland
- Over 33 Seattle parks have developed and semi-developed trails, offering citywide opportunities to be physically active in the outdoors

ASSESSMENT TOOL DEVELOPMENT

- Defined walking usability as environmental supports and barriers that influence walking on a trail
- Determined no existing environmental assessments that measure walking usability for individuals with chronic pain or OA
- Created an assessment tool inspired by the Community Health Environment Checklist (CHEC) and Microscale Audit of Pedestrian Streetscapes Tool-Mini (MAPS-mini)
- Gathered important features to be measured in the assessment tool from:
  - a literature review
  - community meetings with SPR employees
  - a community meeting with Feet First, a non-profit organization that aims to make communities more walkable
  - participants from SPR Sound Steps, a senior walking group

ARTHРИTIS-FRIENDLY TRAIL ASSESSMENT

- The Arthritis-Friendly Trail Assessment (AFTA) is a series of questions measuring trail features that impact OA, chronic pain, and aging adults. Questions assess the following categories:
  - Parking and Transportation
  - Signs and Facilities
  - Trail Features
  - Aesthetics
- Designed for administration by SPR staff, but usable by wider audience
- Test administration kit includes administration protocol, short form, angle finder, tape measure, and pedometer
- Administration time: approximately 60-90 minutes
- Can be administered without additional training

RESULTS

- Positive feedback received from SPR staff after their review of AFTA
- AFTA administered in five parks in Seattle: Magnuson, Ravenna, Maple Leaf, Lincoln, and Volunteer Park
- A brochure of trail information was presented at a Lifelong Recreation class
- Of the 12 attendees who completed a survey on the brochure, 100% reported that it provided new information about SPR trails, that they were more likely to use the trails, and that the brochure was helpful

FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue assessments on parks throughout Seattle
- Design and publish an updated brochure using results gathered from administration of AFTA at additional parks
- Continued use of AFTA by SPR’s Lifelong Recreation to enhance current programming
- Future collaboration with outside organizations, like Feet First, to disseminate AFTA findings to the greater public

REFERENCES