Physical and social functional abilities seem to be maintained by a multifaceted randomized controlled nutritional intervention among old (> 65 years) Danish nursing home residents

The purpose was to test the hypothesis that a multifaceted 11 weeks randomized controlled intervention would have a significant influence of functional abilities in old nursing home residents. Participants were 121 old (>65 years) residents in seven Danish nursing homes. The intervention consisted of nutrition (chocolate, homemade oral supplements), group exercise (moderate intensity) and oral care. Measurements taken were weight, body mass index (BMI), energy and protein intake, and functional abilities (activities of daily living = ADL, cognitive performance, and social engagement). The results showed that the nutrition and exercise were well accepted. After 11 weeks the change in % weight (1.3 vs. -0.6%, p = 0.005), % BMI (0.4 vs. -0.2%, p = 0.003), energy intake (0.7 vs. -0.3 MJ/day, p = 0.084) and protein intake (5 vs. -2 g/day, p = 0.012) was higher in the intervention group than in the control group. Also, after 11 weeks, social and physical function had decreased in the control group but was unchanged in the intervention group. The difference between groups was significant in relation to social engagement (p = 0.009). After the end of the intervention both groups had lost weight and physical function. Cognitive performance did not change, at any time. In conclusion, it seems possible to maintain social (and physical) functional abilities in old nursing home residents by means of a multifaceted intervention.

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