INTRODUCTION

Cross-cultural research has shown marked variation in health outcomes across the world’s older adult populations. Indeed, older adults in the Circumpolar North experience a variety of health disparities. Because aging is a biological process rooted in sociocultural context, there exists great variation in the ways older adults define and experience healthy, or “successful,” aging in their communities. The aim of this analysis was to synthesize qualitative research among older residents (aged 50+ years) in the Circumpolar North to identify a definition of healthy aging common in the region.

METHODS

• A systematic search was conducted for peer-reviewed articles across Google Scholar, PubMed, MEDLINE, CINAHL, Academic Search Premier, PsyARTICLES, Psychology & Behavioral Sciences Collection, Web of Science, and Arctic Health databases for articles published between January 1, 2000 to December 31, 2018.

• The following search words were used: healthy aging or successful aging, and perspectives, or qualitative research, and Circumpolar North, Arctic, Subarctic, Canada, Finland, Denmark, Greenland, Faroe Islands, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, or Alaska.

• Studies were excluded from this analysis if participants were recruited from nursing homes or institutional settings.

• Review studies, articles dedicated to syntheses of professionals’ experiences and perceptions, and studies that quantitatively or objectively tried to measure seniors’ successful aging using a medical model were also excluded.

• 194 articles were assessed for eligibility by the first author, resulting in a total of 23 included articles. The second author then replicated these searches to verify that all possible articles were included.

ANALYSIS

• Manuscripts were coded using line-by-line textual coding of the 23 manuscripts in Nvivo v. 12 Pro.1–23

• Using inductive analysis with a grounded theory framework, the authors attached low-inference codes that came organically from the data to text segments consisting of a sentence or paragraph.

• Co-authors co-coded manuscripts and created 3 iterative drafts of the codebook.

• Since these inter-disciplinary researchers co-coded 20% of the manuscripts and achieved ≥85% inter-rater agreement, this qualitative analysis is considered reliable.25–27

A Qualitative Review of Older Adult Perspectives on Healthy Aging in the Circumpolar North

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RESULTS

Figure 1. A concept map based on our findings from the qualitative literature review

Figure 2. Included study characteristics

• Residents in the Circumpolar North may face unique challenges and opportunities to aging healthfully.

• This is a diverse population that includes Indigenous Elders and cross-cultural transmission.

• Unique themes of the Circumpolar North may include the importance of:

1. Respecting the wisdom of elders
2. Maintaining a relationship to the natural environment
3. Developing psychosocial resilience

• These findings indicate that elders in this region may have traditional values and appear to have a more enduring relationships with nature.

1. This is evident in their expressed desire to share their knowledge and experience with young people

2. Many older adults described spending time on their land and time in nature as essential components of healthy aging

REFERENCES


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