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Leisure activities and mortality: does gender matter?

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Female

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Male

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Sex Factors

Social Behavior

Survival Analysis

Sweden

Abstract: OBJECTIVES: This study examines the association between participation in leisure activities and mortality risk among older men and women. METHODS: A representative sample of 1,246 men and women ages 65 to 95, interviewed in 1991-1992, were followed for 12 years. Cox regressions analyzed mortality risk. RESULTS: Participating in only a few activities doubled mortality risk compared to those with the highest participation levels, even after controlling for age, education, walking ability, and other health indicators. Women had a dose-response relationship between overall participation and survival. Strong associations with survival were found for engagement in organizational activities and study circles among women and hobby activities and gardening among men. DISCUSSION: Results suggest gender differences in the association between leisure activities and mortality. Women display a decreasing mortality risk for each additional activity. Social activities have the strongest effects on survival among women, whereas men seem to benefit from solitary activities.

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