

## Senior Dance: when caring is more than treating

## Dança Sênior: quando cuidar é mais do que tratar

## Danza Senior: cuando cuidar es más que tratar

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Population aging is one of the most profound and challenging changes facing modern society. Each new year of life should not be seen just as a numerical achievement, but as an opportunity to live fully. However, for this longevity to be full of quality of life, health policies need to transcend the treatment of diseases and be directed towards the promotion of health in its entirety. As the World Health Organization (WHO) emphasizes, it is necessary to look at the elderly person not only as someone who needs care, but as a being full of experiences, potentialities and wisdom to be valued.<sup>1</sup> Thus, building healthy aging means allowing each person to flourish, at all stages of life, with autonomy, respect and dignity.

The active ageing policies proposed by the WHO offer a perspective that values social inclusion and respect for gender and cultural diversity, promoting the maintenance of the physical, mental and social health of older people.<sup>2</sup> This approach is based on the idea of "active ageing", which advocates the creation of opportunities for older people to continue to contribute to their communities and enjoy a full life.<sup>2</sup> According to the WHO World Report on Aging and Health, the maintenance of functional capacity should be one of the main goals of health systems, ensuring that aging is experienced in an active and integrated manner.<sup>3</sup> In this sense, health promotion goes beyond the treatment of chronic conditions, encompassing actions that promote the creation of inclusive environments and the strengthening of social networks.<sup>3-4</sup>

In the Region of the Americas, the demographic transition is advancing rapidly, increasing the proportion of older people and requiring public policies that respond to their needs in an intersectoral manner.<sup>4</sup> The Pan American Health Organization projects that, by 2060, the elderly population will represent more than 30% of the total in Latin America and the Caribbean, requiring political responses that go beyond ensuring social protection, but also promote environments that encourage autonomy and active participation.<sup>4-5</sup> The United Nations (UN) reinforces the importance of integrating healthy aging into sustainable development policies, considering it a process that must be addressed throughout life.<sup>5</sup>

In Brazil, the National Policy for the Elderly and the Statute of the Elderly constitute the legal basis to ensure the protection and rights of this population.<sup>6-7</sup> Both documents argue that aging should occur in a context of safety, respect and social inclusion, promoting physical, emotional and social well-being.<sup>6-7</sup> The National Policy for the Elderly emphasizes the need for programs that prevent isolation and promote community integration, while the Statute of the Elderly Person reinforces the right to comprehensive care, respecting the specificities of each elderly person.<sup>6-7</sup>

The National Primary Care Policy (PNAB), in turn, positions primary care as the main strategy to ensure continuous and comprehensive care, especially for the elderly in the Unified Health System (SUS).<sup>8</sup> Primary care should act as a starting point for humanized and accessible care, aimed at prevention and health promotion. In this context, the inclusion of Integrative and Complementary Practices (PICs) in the SUS, according to the National Policy of Integrative and Complementary Practices, presents itself as a possibility for a more comprehensive care model, which transcends medicalization and promotes comprehensiveness.<sup>9</sup>

In this scenario, Senior Dance emerges, promoted by the non-profit organization Senior Dance Brazil. Created to adapt dance to the capabilities and needs of older people, Senior Dance is not just a physical practice. It is a proposal that unites movement, expression and socialization, offering a welcoming and inclusive environment. Its approach integrates body and mind, respecting limitations and valuing the potential of each individual. Thus, Senior Dance seeks to offer not only more years of life, but more life to the years.

Senior Dance aligns with many of the guidelines proposed by the WHO and the SUS for the promotion of active aging. First, it can contribute to the maintenance of functional capacity, considered essential for healthy aging.<sup>2</sup> Through planned and low-impact movements, dance can favor motor coordination, as well as balance, helping to prevent falls and other common problems in old age.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the practice is in line with the principles of health promotion by focusing on the maintenance and improvement of physical abilities.<sup>3</sup>

In addition, Senior Dance can act to promote social inclusion and strengthen community ties, which are central elements for the construction of healthy aging.<sup>2</sup> The practice creates a space where older people feel valued and motivated to participate, contributing to the construction of a support and belonging network.<sup>5</sup> In this way, It could help prevent social isolation, one of the main risk factors for depression and cognitive decline in old age.<sup>6-7</sup>

Another relevant aspect is the adaptation of Senior Dance to promote favorable environments and respect the cultural and gender diversities of the

participants.<sup>4</sup> The activities are adapted to respect the history and cultural preferences of each group, using dance as a form of expression that rescues memories and strengthens personal identity.<sup>8</sup> By taking into account the cultural background of the participants, Senior Dance could create an inclusive and welcoming space that promotes health and quality of life.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, Senior Dance aligns with the National Policy of Integrative and Complementary Practices by providing an approach that integrates body and mind,<sup>9</sup> perhaps the soul and spirit. Dance, in this context, is more than a movement: it is an expression of life that connects people, promoting well-being and quality of life.<sup>9</sup> Its insertion in the SUS could strengthen the care network, offering a complementary alternative to promote healthy and active aging.

Given this scenario, Senior Dance, when integrated into existing policies, can contribute significantly to the health and well-being of older people, by using dance as a means of valuing the individual, promoting health and transforming the way aging is experienced. Its inclusion in public policies must be planned with caution and respect for specificities, always seeking to create environments where people can flourish and celebrate life at all ages.

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