This study examined the effect of physical activity counseling on initiating specific form of exercise among older people with manifest mobility limitation, preclinical mobility limitation, and without mobility limitation. The data presented comes from a two-year randomized controlled trial called Screening and Counseling for Physical Activity and Mobility in Older People (SCAMOB, ISRCTN 07330512). The study population comprised of 632 participants who did not do any specific exercise form, able to move independently outdoors, cognitively intact, and 75-81-year-old at baseline in 2003. These people were randomized in the intervention group n=318 and control group n=314. The intervention consisted of individualized face-to-face meeting with the physical activity counselor, in the beginning, followed by telephone contacts every three to four months over the period of two years. The data were collected with structured interviews in a home-interview. Study attrition was low (9%). Generalized estimating equations (GEE) analysis was performed to analyze the effect of the intervention on initiating physical exercise.

Older people in the intervention group were more likely to initiate supervised physical training (OR 1.30, CI 95% 1.02-1.66) and water aerobics (OR 2.31, CI 95% 1.52-3.52) during the intervention and followed-up 3 years after baseline compared to control group. Those in the intervention group and no mobility limitation initiated more often weight training (OR 2.31, CI 95% 1.31-4.08) and water aerobics (OR 3.98, CI 95% 2.06-7.69) compared with the control group. And those in the intervention group and manifest mobility limitation initiated more often water aerobics (OR 3.54, CI 95% 1.14-10.9) compared with the control group. There were no differences in initiating walking for fitness.

These findings suggest that this kind of physical activity counseling increases initiating physical exercises among older people with different levels of mobility limitations.

Keywords: Ageing, Health Promotion, Physical Activity