Abstract

Aims: to assess and compare nutritional status and functional capacity of elderly goers of groups for guided physical activity or for guided recreational activities. Methods: Cross-sectional study with 210 elderly (60 years old or more) of coexistence groups (for physical or recreational activities). Nutritional status was assessed by the Mini Nutritional Assessment and Body Mass Index. Muscle mass was estimated by calf circumference (cut point of 31 cm for both genders) and strength was evaluated by hydraulic dynamometer, which measures the opponent’s finger maximal strength. The study was approved by Research Ethics Committee.

Results: Were enrolled 106 elderly in recreational group and 104 in physical activity group. Most of the sample (86.7%) were female. The mean age was 69.3 years old. Body Mass Index showed 82.9% of seniors with excessive weight (87.7% in recreational and 77.9% in physical activity group, p=0.04). When assessed by Mini Nutritional Assessment, 22.9% was classified as malnourished or at risk of malnutrition, with no difference between groups. The mean calf circumference was 37.3 ± 4.1 cm, decreasing significantly with aging (p=0.05) and being higher in elderly with higher BMI (p=0.001). Calf circumference was also greater in physical activity group. Muscle strength’s mean was 6.77 (IQR: 5.83, 7.90) kg, with significantly higher values among men. There was no significant variation between age, nutritional status or between groups. Conclusions: This study presented as its main findings that most seniors showed no nutritional risk, with high prevalence of overweight. The practice of physical activities was associated with greater CP and greater functionality of the opposing finger muscles, which indicates the importance of maintaining physical activity in the aging process, in order to prevent frailty and disability.

Keywords
Aging, Physical capacity, Frailty, Calf circumference, Dynamometry.