

# Promoting Well-Being and Autonomy in the Elderly: The Role of Cognitive Development Programmes from a Bioethical Perspective

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## Opinion

Ageing is a natural process that affects people's bodies and minds. As the world's population ages, it has become increasingly important to address the issue of cognitive development in older people. Cognitive development programs can help maintain mental health, reduce the risk of dementia and improve quality of life in later life.

### Bioethics and older people

Bioethics is a branch of ethics that focuses on ethical issues related to human life and health. In particular, bioethics deals with issues that arise in the field of medical research and health care. One of the issues that has received the most attention in bioethics in recent years is ageing and care for the elderly, Garcia [1]. In today's world, the population is ageing rapidly. In many countries, the proportion of people over the age of 65 is increasing, which raises important ethical issues related to the care of the elderly. Cognitive development programs are one of the tools that are increasingly being used to help older people maintain their mental and cognitive health, López [2]. Bioethics according to García (2004) deals with the values and principles that should guide decision-making in the field of health and life. In the case of the elderly, bioethics focuses on the problems that may arise in relation to their health care and quality of life. Among the most relevant issues in this field are the following:

- a) **Decision-making:** Older people may find it difficult to make informed decisions about their own health and well-being. It is important that healthcare professionals and caregivers respect their preferences and provide them with the information they need to make informed decisions.
- b) **Autonomy:** Autonomy is one of the fundamental values in bioethics. In the case of older people, autonomy may be limited by their health status or life circumstances. It is important that their autonomy is respected as far as possible and that they are allowed to make decisions to the extent that they are capable of doing so.
- c) **Dignity:** Dignity is another fundamental value in bioethics. In the case of older people, it is particularly important that their dignity is respected and that they are treated with the respect and consideration they deserve.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), cognitive development can be defined as "the set of mental processes that include learning, perception, memory, thinking and problem solving" (WHO, 2021). As people age, it is common for them to experience a decline in these cognitive skills, which can have a negative impact on their quality of life. It is therefore important to address the promotion of cognitive development in the older population.

### Cognitive development programs for older adults

Cognitive development programs, as stated by Salguero, Álvarez and Domínguez [3], focus on training specific cognitive skills, such as memory, attention and reasoning. These programs can help older people improve their cognitive performance and maintain their

independence and quality of life for longer. However, they also raise some important ethical issues. Cognitive development programs for older people have become increasingly popular in recent years. These programs often include activities that stimulate the brain, such as memory exercises, logic games and puzzles. Some programs also incorporate physical and social activities, as it has been shown that these factors can have a positive impact on cognitive development [4]. A study by Gates et al. [4] evaluated the effectiveness of a cognitive development programme for older people. The programme included memory, attention, processing speed and problem-solving exercises, as well as physical and social exercises. The results showed that the programme significantly improved participants' cognitive skills as well as their emotional well-being.

Another study by Ball et al. [5] found that a physical and mental exercise programme significantly reduced the risk of developing dementia in older people. The programme included endurance, balance and strength exercises, as well as brain-stimulating activities such as logic games and puzzles. Cognitive development programs for older people are those that seek to maintain or improve the cognitive abilities of older people. These programs may include activities such as memory games, attention exercises, reasoning exercises or physical activities that require coordination, Portellano [6].

Best practices in this area include the following:

A. Adaptation to older people's abilities: Cognitive development programs should be adapted to older people's abilities and limitations. It is important that their health status and level of cognitive functioning are taken into account in order to tailor activities to their needs.

B. Inclusion of varied activities: Cognitive development programs should include varied activities that allow different cognitive areas to be worked on. It is important to include activities that stimulate memory, attention, reasoning and coordination.

C. Active participation of older people: It is important that older people are actively involved in cognitive development programs and that they are given feedback on their progress. Active participation can foster older people's motivation and commitment to the programme.

### **Bioethical relevance of cognitive development programs**

From a bioethical perspective, cognitive development programs for older people are relevant because they promote the well-being and autonomy of this population. Bioethics focuses on ethical

decision-making in health care and scientific research and promotes respect for the autonomy of individuals and the promotion of well-being. Cognitive development programs for older people promote these values by improving the quality of life of this population and enabling them to maintain their autonomy for longer. In addition, cognitive development programs can also help reduce the cost of health care. Dementia and other cognitive diseases are a significant financial burden on healthcare systems worldwide. By reducing the risk of these diseases, cognitive development programs can help reduce the financial burden on health care systems and allow resources to be used more effectively, Zamarrón [7-10].

### **Conclusion**

In summary, cognitive development programs for older people are a valuable tool for promoting well-being and autonomy in older age. These programs can improve cognitive skills, reduce the risk of dementia and improve the quality of life of older people. From a bioethical perspective, cognitive development programs promote respect for the autonomy of individuals and the promotion of well-being. In addition, these programs can also help to reduce the financial burden on health care systems. Therefore, it is important to continue to research and develop effective cognitive development programs for older people.

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