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Type of Contribution:

Age Range Adult, Older Adult

Population Visual Impairment, Deafblindness

Physical Activity Visual Impairment, Deafblindness

Session Activity Research Presentation (20 minutes)

Case Study. Experiences of an older adult with Ushers Syndrome at parkrun.

This case study is part of a wider qualitative research study on the experiences of vision impaired participants at a weekly, community led 5km event called parkrun.

The study describes the experiences of a retired Irish man, who has progressive vision impairment and hearing loss caused by Ushers Syndrome type 2. He describes how he has engaged with physical activity prior to starting parkrun and how this has changed as his sight and hearing deteriorated. It explores the barriers he has faced to engaging with physical activity, in particular the personal barriers experienced as his vision deteriorated and how this affected his ability to exercise.

It details his experiences of engagement, with the aid of a volunteer sighted guide, in this mainstream community running event. He attributes his positive experience of engagement with helping him come to terms with using his long cane more confidently and in his acceptance of his deteriorating vision.

Although his initial motivation in taking part was to engage in physical activity, he discusses how participation in the event allows him to feel part of a community. The case study explores the benefits that being part of this community have brought him, in terms of social and cultural capital.

He describes his experiences of running with volunteer sighted guides and how the non-competitive and inclusive nature of the event made him feel comfortable in taking part and continuing to participate. Other older adults who have reduced vision, may he feels, benefit from taking part in similar events to benefit their physical health and to improve their ability to engage socially with their local community.