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Ageing in Place: The Experiences of Older Adults Accessing Health Services in the Wakatipu

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Abstract

Access to health services is vital for maintaining the quality of life for older people. Older people living in rural and remote areas often have specific barriers to accessing good quality and timely health services. Poor health service access can make it difficult for older people in remote communities to ‘age in place’. This research explored the experiences of older residents accessing health services in the Wakatipu area of New Zealand, to provide the opportunity for older people in the area to have their voices heard, and to inform service provision in the area. The experiences of older people accessing health services in rural or remote areas are pivotal to formulating policies and building communities founded on wellbeing. A qualitative framework was chosen to record and analyse the rich and detailed experiences of the participants. Eight people aged over 75 years, who currently live in the Wakatipu basin, were interviewed. The interviews were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which enables detailed attention to people’s lived experiences. Two superordinate themes of the places that people age, and strategies to maintain the positive ageing ideal, were identified. The results indicated that older adults view health services not in the narrow sense of provision of traditional GP and hospital services, but in the context of all the components required to age well in the location of their choice. This highlights the need to actively include older adults in the planning and decision making process for civic amenities, environmental design, transport, and health services.

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