Join social groups and live longer in golden years

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How do you plan to take care of yourself after retirement? New research recommends that you join social groups such as book clubs since having a social hobby is like regular exercise to live happier and longer.  
  
The more social groups an individual belongs to in the first few years after she or he stops working, the lower their risk of death, showed findings of a research carried out at the University of Queensland School of Psychology, in Australia.  
  
Researchers Niklas Steffens and Tegan Cruwys wrote in their study paper that: "As much as practitioners may help retirees adjust by providing support with financial planning, social groups may also help by providing social planning."   
  
In this regard, practical interventions should focus on helping retirees to maintain their sense of purpose and belonging by assisting them to connect to groups and communities that are meaningful to them, said the researchers.  
The paper titled English Longitudinal Study of Ageing was published in the journal BMJ Open.  
  
To assess the impact of social group memberships, researchers tracked the health of 424 people at least 50 years old for six years after they retired.   
  
They were compared with the same number of people, matched for age, gender and health status but who were still working.  
Each participant was asked how many different organisations, clubs or societies they belonged to and which ones.   
Every group membership lost after retirement was associated with nearly 10 per cent drop in quality of life score six years later, the study found.  
If a person belonged to two groups before retirement and kept these up over the following six years, their risk of dying increased by only two percent.  
  
"This is an observational study so no firm conclusions could be drawn about cause and effect but the findings have unique practical implications for retirement planning," the researchers noted.