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## **Smartphone Apps Help Teach Older Adults New Health Tricks**

**New Orleans, LA** - Training older adults to use specialized Smartphone applications can raise their awareness of ways to improve their health, according to preliminary results from a study at the Stanford University School of Medicine.

The results will be presented April 11 at a poster session of the Society of Behavioral Medicine Annual Meeting in New Orleans.

The study is part of an effort by researchers at the Stanford Prevention Research Center to find new ways of encouraging U.S. adults to increase their physical activity and improve their health. Past studies have indicated that few meet the minimum recommended guidelines of 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity per week.

Principal investigator Abby King, PhD, director of the Healthy Aging Studies and Health Promotion Information Technology group at the SPRC, and her team have been examining ways to use new communication technologies, such as mobile phones, to deliver the nudges that might improve adults' physical activity levels.

For the study, Smartphones were loaned to 31 adults between the ages of 45 and 77 who had never before owned or regularly used this type of phone. Each phone contained an application targeting at least one health behavior: increased walking, decreased sitting time or improved diet. The participants were trained on how to operate the phones and the apps, which they used for eight weeks, said Sandra Winter, PhD, first author of the poster presentation and a behavioral medicine investigator.

"At the end of the study, more than 80 percent of the participants reported that the apps helped raise awareness regarding the targeted health behavior," Winter said. Three-quarters of the participants reported that the apps helped track the behavior, and two-thirds said the apps increased their motivation to make improvements. The results also indicated that fewer than 10 percent of participants felt they didn't understand how to use the Smartphones, and more than 96 percent said the Smartphones were a fast, efficient means of gaining information.

The team is planning further research to determine if the Smartphone apps result in improved health behaviors and outcomes. In addition, they hope to test the apps in Latino populations, both in the United States and internationally.

Authors include Sandra Winter, PhD, Eric Hekler, PhD; Lauren Grieco, PhD; Frank Chen, PhD; Stephanie Pollitt, Kate Youngman, MA, and Abby C King, PhD.

*The Society of Behavioral Medicine is a multidisciplinary organization of clinicians, educators, and scientists dedicated to promoting the study of the interactions of behavior with biology and the environment and the application of that knowledge to improve the health and well being of individuals, families, communities, and populations. [www.sbm.org](http://www.sbm.org)*

*This study was presented during the 2012 Annual Meeting and Scientific Session of the Society of Behavioral Medicine (SBM) from April 11-14 in New Orleans, LA. However, it does not reflect the policies or the opinion of the SBM.*

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