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Mobile Phone Program Helps Hearts

A New Mobile Phone Program Designed to Encourage People to Exercise has Proved Successful

San Francisco, CA - Recent results from a randomized controlled trial showed a mobile phone text program increased physical activity in people with cardiovascular disease.

“Exercise is the cornerstone of cardiac rehabilitation for people with heart disease,” says Dr. Ralph Maddison. “But many of those with heart disease do not undertake sufficient levels of exercise, and so, do not realize the benefits.”

“High ownership and use of mobile phones and wireless technologies (such as mHealth), provides the opportunity to improve the delivery of exercise-based cardiac rehabilitation,” he says.

In a poster session on Saturday, March 23, 2013 from 10:15 to 11:45 a.m. Pacific Time, at the Society of Behavioral Medicine’s Annual Meeting, Dr. Maddison will discuss how the intervention was developed and present the key findings from this trial.

A grant from New Zealand’s Health Research Council, has allowed researchers at The University of Auckland to develop and test a mobile phone and internet delivered exercise program. The trial involved a group of 171 New Zealand adults with cardiovascular disease (CVD).

Half of the people in the study were randomly allocated an automated mobile phone program of personalized text messages to help them exercise safely on a regular basis, says Dr. Maddison. The program was developed to help individuals participate in moderate to vigorous intensity exercise for a minimum of 30 minutes per day for most days of the week. Messages included information about how to exercise (what to do and at what intensity) and provided support to help people overcome barriers to exercise and keep motivated.

As part of the package, people were able to access a website that provided additional information, text, and video messages to increase motivation to exercise. The other half of people involved in the research trial continued with their normal exercise behavior.

Results showed that people who received the mobile phone intervention spent more time each day in leisure time physical activity and walking and were more confident to exercise compared to those who did not receive the program. The people in the intervention also reported greater feelings of general health at six months.

The Society of Behavioral Medicine (www.sbm.org) 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.

This study was presented during the 2013 Annual Meeting & Scientific Sessions of the Society of Behavioral Medicine (SBM) from March 20-23 in San Francisco, CA; however, it does not reflect the policies or the opinion of the SBM.

Given that this study was presented at a scientific meeting, the data and conclusions reached should be regarded as preliminary, until they are published in a peer-reviewed journal. This research was supported by the Health Research Council (HRC 10/446) and Heart Foundation of New Zealand. PI: Ralph Maddison. The authors reported no financial interests and/or other relationships.

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