

Conference urges research on physical activity in disease prevention, treatment

Arizona State University

To treat chronic conditions like obesity, diabetes and heart disease, doctors may need to tell their patients to get moving. More research is needed to compare prescribed treatments for these conditions, including physical activity. That's the rationale behind a health research conference hosted by Arizona State University which aims to spur more research into physical activity as a treatment and prevention approach.

The conference will be from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Nov. 17, at ASU's Downtown Phoenix campus, NHI-2 Building, 550 N. 3rd St., room 110, Phoenix. The event is presented by ASU, Mayo Clinic, American College of Sports Medicine, Anytime Fitness and Healthways.

Medical, pharmaceutical and surgical interventions are generally at the top of the list for treating these chronic conditions. But this ignores the reality that physical activity has powerful benefits, and often at a fraction of the cost, says Barbara Ainsworth, associate director for health promotion programs in the ASU School of Nutrition and Health Promotion.

"With the move toward health care reform, there should be a lot of interest in keeping people healthy and out of the hospital," she says. "We want to encourage researchers to develop studies that include physical activity, to guide health care strategies at both the individual practitioner and overall health system level.

"Little research has included physical activity as a comparative treatment option, though it has been shown to be a very powerful one. Researchers have been focused on traditional medical approaches, when comparing treatments. Physical activity is not on their radar."

Physical activity doesn't have many of the side effects of medication and has been shown to also lower blood pressure, reduce depression and enhance cognitive function, she says.

The conference will create a collaborative research network and build a research agenda for "comparative effectiveness research" that compares efficacy, costs, benefits, harms and overall health outcomes of physical activity and lifestyle approaches for chronic disease risk reduction.

The conference features nationally prominent speakers from government, medicine and science, public health, philanthropy and industry. Keynote speaker is Dr. David Buchner, director of the masters of public health program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign who directed the physical activity and health branch at the

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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for nine years.

Among other speakers are Steven N. Blair, professor in the Departments of Exercise Science and Epidemiology and Biostatistics at the University of South Carolina and a recognized authority on exercise and health; I-Min Lee, professor of medicine in the Department of Epidemiology at Harvard and author of a recent widely-reported article linking physical inactivity to 1 in 10 deaths worldwide; Toni Yancey, professor in the Department of Health Services at UCLA and co-director of the UCLA Kaiser Permanente Center for Health Equity; and James Sallis, Distinguished Professor of Family and Preventive Medicine at the University of California, San Diego and director of Active Living Research.

The conference, "National Strategic Summit: Roadmap for Physical Activity, Lifestyle and Comparative Effectiveness Research," is aimed at health practitioners, educators and students, with online pre-registration until Oct. 31. On-site registration fees apply afterward.

For more information and registration, go to

<http://healthpromotion.asu.edu/comparative-effectiveness-research> [1].

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