

Is current medical training preparing physicians to prescribe exercise to their patients?

To reduce the pandemic of chronic disease, the World Health Organization implores physicians to target physical inactivity as a key risk factor. Chronic disease causes the majority of Canadian deaths, and if physical inactivity, poor diet, and smoking were eliminated, 80% of all heart disease, stroke, and type 2 diabetes, and 40% of cancers would be prevented.¹ Physical activity is effective treatment and prevention in 25 chronic conditions.²

Exercise follows a dose response curve, with greater health benefits accrued by those who attain higher levels of fitness, with 50% reduced risk of all-cause mortality and cardiovascular disease death compared with those with the lowest fitness.³ If Canadians attained the physical activity guideline level of 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity (MVPA) per week, premature deaths of Canadians would decrease 30%.² From a population health perspective, significantly smaller amounts of physical activity also provide substantial health benefits. Inactive patients can lower their mortality risk by 10% by simply walking 10 minutes a day.²

Despite the irrefutable benefits of exercise, only 17.6% of Canadians attain guideline levels of physical activity,⁴ and only 15.8% of Canadian physicians provide patients with exercise prescriptions.⁵ Why this disconnect? Physicians cite lack of time and remuneration as barriers to exer-

cise prescriptions. The most common barriers, however, among medical students, residents, and clinicians are lack of knowledge, training, and competence in exercise prescriptions.

The importance of preparing physicians to counsel and prescribe exercise to patients is widely recognized outside the medical community. Education, training, and the clinical practice of writing exercise prescriptions

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have been identified in global strategies and national policies, including the Canadian Senate's report, *Obesity in Canada*, which makes recommendations to "encourage improved training for physicians regarding diet and physical activity" and "promote the use of physician physical activity counseling, including the use of prescriptions for exercise."⁶

UBC undergraduate medical education has started to incorporate exercise medicine into the curriculum, yet most residency training programs have not. In a recent study of 396 UBC family medicine residents, 95.6% indicated prescribing exercise will be important in their future practice, yet only 14.9% perceived their training in exercise prescriptions as adequate.⁷ Furthermore, 91% of these future physicians indicated they wanted more training in exercise medicine and exercise prescribing.⁷ Such training can impact behavior, with Canadian doctors reporting greater confidence discussing exercise and providing more written exercise prescriptions 3 months following a 1-day workshop.⁸

All patients are impacted by physical activity. This underscores the universal importance of doctors having foundational knowledge in exercise medicine. Physicians and trainees are currently insufficiently prepared to discuss physical activity and prescribe exercise to their patients. Addressing this deficiency at all stages of medical training is urgent, given the increasing prevalence of chronic disease and its unprecedented health and economic implications on our society. BC has an opportunity to challenge the status quo, create educational opportunities in exercise medicine, and improve the health and lives of our patients and our communities.

A CME-accredited half-day workshop in exercise prescription is coming to Vancouver on Saturday, 28 April, at VGH. For more information and to register, visit <http://casem-acmse.org/event/eimc> or email eimc.ubc@gmail.com.

—Kara Solmundson, MD, CCFP (SEM), Sport Med Dip, MSc

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The creator of Stories for Caregivers, Bannister Bergen, says that nearly 30% of Canadians over the age of 15 care for a family member or loved one, but they receive a lack of attention and support. Stories for Caregivers is there to let them know that they are not alone.

Reference

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MOVEMENT IS MEDICINE

Vancouver, 28 Apr (Sat)

Few doctors feel comfortable prescribing exercise to their patients—do you? Movement is Medicine: What’s Your Patients’ Best Exercise Prescription, is an interactive half-day workshop designed to empower primary health care providers with the skills, confidence, and tools to provide exercise counselling and prescription to patients of all ages. Learning objectives: review evidence for the harms of physical inactivity and benefits of physical activity; understand the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines for patients of all ages; learn to incorporate the Exercise Vital Sign into your office visits in 1 minute, or less; use simple motivation interview strategies to reframe barriers and enhance behavioral change; is exercise safe? Do I need to medically clear patients for exercise? Learn what the best approach is for your patients with pre-existing chronic disease. Credits: 7 Mainpro+ credits. To register and for more information, visit casem-acmse.org/event/eimc/ or email eimc.ubc@gmail.com.

VULVOVAGINAL HEALTH UPDATE

Vancouver, 3 May (Thu)

UBC CPD is excited to announce the first BC conference addressing vulvar health! We expect a strong regional interest as vulvovaginal disorders are one of the top reasons women seek help from their family doctors. To be held at UBC Robson Square, this unique conference was planned with women’s health care providers in mind and will provide education in vulvovaginal disorders. Areas that will be addressed include: vulvar skin con-

ditions, urogenital symptoms of menopause, sexual health concerns, vulvar pain conditions, and recurrent vulvovaginal infections. The focus will be on practical diagnosis and management. Target audience: family physicians, gynecologists, dermatologists, nurse practitioners, residents, medical students. Presentation by invited speaker Lynne Margesson, MD, Geisel School of Medicine, Dartmouth, on Vulvar Ulcers Update and Office Management of Hidradenitis Suppurativa of the Vulva. Conference information, program details, and online registration: ubccpd.ca/course/vulvar-health-2018. Tel 604 875-5101, fax 604 875-5078, email cpd.info@ubc.ca; web <https://ubccpd.ca>.

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