

For immediate release: Activity Trackers Paired with Professional Coaching Significantly Help Increase Physical Activity in Patients with Knee Osteoarthritis

April 30, 2018 (Vancouver, BC) – According to new research from British Columbia, patients with knee osteoarthritis saw substantial improvements in their physical activity when they started using a Fitbit and had ongoing counselling with a physiotherapist.

For patients who have knee osteoarthritis, physical activity is an essential first-line treatment. However, only 13% of patients meet the activity recommendation of 150 minutes or more per week. Led by Dr. Linda Li, a Senior Research Scientist at Arthritis Research Canada, the study evaluated the effectiveness of a physical activity tracker, such as a Fitbit, when paired with a brief education session and telephone goal counselling with a physiotherapist. A total of 61 patients with knee osteoarthritis participated in the study and were assessed to see if the program led to increased daily activity and reduced sedentary time.

The results are promising. Not only did patients spend more time being active, but they had an increase in daily step count and an improvement in quality of life. This new model of care—using a tracker and having access to a therapist for goal counselling—allows patients to monitor their activity, share their progress, and obtain feedback from a health professional regardless of where they live.

Dr. Linda Li explains that this model of care is an example of how patients can integrate regular physical activity into daily life, stating that “it is sometimes difficult for patients with arthritis to get advice on how to be active without making pain worse. Our research shows that using a popular fitness band with the coaching of a physiotherapist who is knowledgeable about arthritis can help achieve this goal.”

While the study showed an increase in physical activity, it did not show a reduction in the time spent in sedentary activities, like sitting. Consequently, this led to a modification of the program in two studies currently recruiting participants. Both studies are using a similar counselling model, but also integrate a Fitbit compatible app called Fitviz, which provides users positive reinforcements to help sustain long-term behavior changes.

For more information on the two studies currently recruiting people with rheumatoid arthritis, systemic lupus erythematosus, or knee osteoarthritis, please contact: Halima Elmi at helmi@arthritisresearch.ca or 604-207-4053.

About ARTHRITIS RESEARCH CANADA:

Arthritis Research Canada (ARC) is the largest clinical arthritis research centre in North America. Our mission is to transform the lives of people living with arthritis through research and engagement. Led by world-renowned rheumatologist, Dr. John Esdaile, ARC's scientific team of 70 are creating a future where people living with arthritis are empowered to triumph over pain and disability. Each of the three centres in BC, Alberta and Quebec are leading research in arthritis prevention, early diagnosis, treatment and quality of life issues.

For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact:

Mira Galperin

Marketing and Communications

Arthritis Research Canada

604-207-4010 or mgalperin@arthritisresearch.ca