

The Urban Training Intervention Increases Physical Activity in COPD Patients

The results of a study published in European Respiratory Journal propose a new approach for the management of this respiratory disease

BARCELONA, 5 October 2018-. Increasing physical activity in patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a key strategy – and a major challenge – in the fight against this respiratory disorder. According to a study published in [European Respiratory Journal](#), the Urban Training intervention for COPD patients designed by the Barcelona Institute for Global Health (ISGlobal) –an institution supported by "la Caixa" Foundation– has proved efficacious in **achieving, for the first time, a significant long-term increase in physical activity.**

“So far, interventions aimed at increasing physical activity had focused on the patients’ individual biological and psychological factors. We had already observed that [COPD patients who walk the dog or take care of their grandchildren](#) have higher physical activity levels, so we changed perspective in order to propose a **customised approach according to each patient’s interpersonal and environmental determinants of physical activity**” explains ISGlobal researcher and lead author of the study Ane Arbillaga.

The Urban Training project proposes a tailored intervention based on six components: **interviews** and follow-up phone calls aimed at increasing and maintaining participants’ motivation; a selection of [previously validated walking trials](#) with different levels of difficulty; **a pedometer and a calendar** so that participants can record their physical activity; motivational or informative **text messages** sent regularly via mobile phone; join a **walking group** once a month with an experienced trainer; and **a phone number** to contact physiotherapists for any questions.

To assess the efficacy and the effectiveness of this innovative approach, the research team recruited **407 COPD patients in 33 health care centres in five Catalan seaside cities** (Viladecans, Gavà, Barcelona, Badalona and Mataró). Participants were divided in two groups: the control group followed standard treatment and recommendations, while the other group followed the Urban Training in addition to usual care. Analyses revealed that, **after 12 months**, patients who followed the recommendations of the Urban Training group **increased their physical activity by more than 900 steps per day**, as compared to the control group. **This is the first time** an intervention is shown to have an effect beyond 4 months. This is probably the reason the Rehabilitation Area of the European Respiratory Society selected this **study among the five best ones in the last 12 months.**

“These are encouraging results for COPD research and show that Urban Training **can open new avenues in disease management**”, says Judith Garcia-Aymerich, coordinator of the study and head of the [Non-Communicable Diseases and Environment programme](#) at ISGlobal. “The data clearly underpin the need to consider individual social and cultural factors as well as each person’s environment when designing future interventions,” she adds.

Reference

Arbillaga-Etxarri A, Gimeno-Santos E, Barberan-Garcia A, et al. Long-term efficacy and effectiveness of a behavioural and community-based exercise intervention (Urban Training-) to increase physical activity in patients with COPD. A randomised controlled trial. Eur Respir J 2018; in press <https://doi.org/10.1183/13993003.00063-2018>

About ISGlobal

The Barcelona Institute of Global Health (ISGlobal) is the result of an innovative alliance between the “la Caixa” Foundation and academic and government institutions. The Institute was set up to contribute to the work undertaken by the international community to address global health challenges. ISGlobal has consolidated a hub of excellence in research and medical care that has its roots in work first started in the world of health care by the Hospital Clínic and the Mar Health Park and in the academic sphere by the University of Barcelona and Pompeu Fabra University. The pivotal mechanism of its work model is the transfer of knowledge generated by scientific research to practice, a task undertaken by the Institute’s Education, Policy, and Global Development departments. ISGlobal is a member of CERCA, the Catalan Government’s network of research centres.

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