

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY ALLIANCE

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It's Time to Move

Integrating physical activity into America's healthcare system

OVERVIEW

Despite the abundance of evidence on the importance of physical activity for individuals of all ages, races and abilities, our current healthcare system does not have a standardized physical activity measure that can be easily utilized by health professionals in electronic health record systems. As a result, millions of Americans lack the appropriate assessment, prescription, referral, and counseling for physical activity that would prevent or manage many of the most painful, distressing, and fatal chronic diseases. Current efforts to modernize the healthcare system, however, provide a unique and timely opportunity to integrate and elevate physical activity into the system.

"It's Time to Move" is a multi-year project that will empower health care providers in America to seamlessly integrate physical activity clinical measures into patient care plans and help make physical activity prescriptions a standard of care. We are contributing to the ["Active People, Healthy Nation"](#) movement, helping 27 million people be more physically active by 2027.

Five-Point Plan

We will achieve this goal by 1) Creating a set of standardized measures for physical activity in electronic health records for assessment, prescription, and referral; 2) Developing a proof of concept application to share with software vendors and their users; 3) Demonstrating the effectiveness of systemic physical activity integration as a transformative healthcare system innovation that connects the clinic to the community; 4) Collaborating with a non-profit, mission-driven communications agency to develop a reinvigorated narrative for promoting healthy movement and physical activity to patients, policymakers, and decisionmakers; and 5) Implementing data capture and surveillance systems to continually assess impact and refine protocols.

BACKGROUND & RATIONALE

It's Time to Move for Health

Being physically active is one of the most important lifestyle behaviors people can engage in to maintain physical health, mental health, and well-being,¹ and has been shown to contribute to social connectedness,² quality of life,³ and environmental sustainability,

As a physician working directly with patients and later as the US Surgeon General, I encouraged a focus on physical activity as foundational to achieving healthier, more equitable communities, and central to prevention and policy efforts. The health benefits of physical activity profoundly impact individuals of every age, ability, race, and ethnicity. Developing clinical standards for physical activity is key to giving the healthcare system the tools it needs to provide the patient-centered comprehensive approaches necessary to prevent or manage many chronic diseases. - Dr. Regina Benjamin, MD, 18th Surgeon General of the United States

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amongst other benefits.^{4, 5 6} In the United States, however, only 26 percent of men and 19 percent of women report sufficient activity to meet physical activity guidelines,⁷ contributing to over 140,000 premature deaths on an annual basis.⁸ Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has increased inactivity for many people, further contributing to persistent racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic disparities.

It's Time to Move for National Defense

Low physical activity levels pose immediate and long-term threats not only to individual health, but also our nation's safety and security. Currently, 71 percent of Americans 17-24 fail to meet eligibility requirements for entrance into the military, creating a serious recruiting deficit.⁹ Of those who do meet the service requirements, injuries associated with low fitness levels cost the Department of Defense hundreds of millions of dollars and have been identified as the most significant medical impediment to military readiness.^{10,11}

It's Time to Move for the Economy

Inadequate levels of physical activity lead to \$117 billion in annual health care costs in the United States.¹² Moreover, additional research demonstrates that people who start to exercise before or during middle age typically save anywhere from \$824 to \$1,874 annually on health care costs after retirement – and those who start earlier in their lives tend to save more than others.¹³

CONCLUSION

The science is clear: physical activity is necessary for a heart healthy life and is a major contributor to mental health and overall wellbeing. It is time to leverage this science, engage with current healthcare system modernization efforts, and formally integrate physical activity into our nation's healthcare system. With your support we can help transform the health system and connect patients to resources in the community to help them move more. More details and budget available upon request. Thank you!

KEY ORGANIZATIONS

Physical Activity Alliance

Founded by The National Physical Activity Plan Alliance, The National Physical Activity Society, and The National Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity, the mission of the [Physical Activity Alliance](#) (PAA) is to lead efforts to create, support, and advocate for policy and system changes that enable all Americans to enjoy physically active lives.

American Heart Association

The [American Heart Association](#) (AHA) is one of the largest and most trusted voluntary health organizations in the U.S. mission is to be a relentless force for a world of longer, healthier lives. AHA fulfills its mission by bringing rigorous scientific research to life in clinical healthcare guidelines, trust-worthy patient and caregiver resources, evidence-based policies, and equity-focused community programming to improve the overall health and wellbeing of all Americans.

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Guided by the strongest scientific evidence, we convene key partners, volunteers, and grassroots citizens to transform systems, policies, and communities to build an equitable foundation of health and wellness for all.

Health Level Seven International (HL7)

Founded in 1987, Health Level Seven International (HL7) is a not-for-profit, ANSI-accredited standards developing organization dedicated to providing a comprehensive framework and related standards for the exchange, integration, sharing, and retrieval of electronic health information that supports clinical practice and the management, delivery, and evaluation of health services. The organization represents approximately 500 corporate members, which include more than 90 percent of the information systems vendors serving healthcare. HL7 collaborates with other standards developers and provider, payer, philanthropic and government agencies at the highest levels to ensure the development of comprehensive and reliable standards and successful interoperability efforts.

References:

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⁴ Global Advocacy Council for Physical Activity International Society for Physical Activity and Health. The Toronto Charter for Physical Activity: A Global Call for Action. *J Phys Act Health*. 2010;7 Suppl 3:S370-85.

⁵ Safe routes to school: Steps to a greener future. How walking and bicycling to school reduce carbon emissions and air pollutants. Accessed online November 2020 at https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/sites/default/files/pdf/SRTS_GHG_lo_res.pdf.

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