

Virtual rehabilitation can reduce heart disease risk, study finds

October 1 2014, by Marianne Meadahl

A study on web-based cardiac rehabilitation led by Simon Fraser University and St. Paul's Hospital researcher Scott Lear has found that a virtual program can reduce heart disease risk in patients.

Researchers developed and tested a [rehabilitation program](#) that offered monitoring, education and support to [heart disease](#) patients living in small urban and rural areas throughout British Columbia.

Cardiac rehabilitation programs are effective treatment options for patients with heart disease, a leading cause of death and disability, to prevent heart attacks and premature death. However, accessibility to these programs largely impacts how much people will use them.

"Because these programs are generally administered within hospitals or health centres, many people find them inconvenient or unfeasible to attend," said Dr. Lear who also holds the Pfizer/Heart and Stroke Foundation Chair in Cardiovascular Research at St. Paul's Hospital.

"Our virtual program brought care into patients' homes to help manage their disease and reduce their risk for heart disease, all at a time dictated by the patient."

Typically only 10-30 percent of eligible patients participate in cardiac rehabilitation programs. Barriers include travel distance to the program, the time commitment and the inconvenience of maintaining a regimented schedule.

The impact is especially great in rural and remote areas, where heart disease rates tend to be higher yet access is a primary challenge.

The researchers found that after 16 weeks in the program, patients improved their exercise capacity, diet and cholesterol levels, and all of these changes were still present a year after the program ended.

Program participants saw a lower number of hospital visits while drop-out rates and staff time required with the virtual program were also lower than in-person care. The study was published in the American Heart Association journal *Circulation: Cardiovascular Quality and Outcomes*.

"Cardiac rehabilitation programs are key to managing patients with heart disease, but not everyone can attend so we need new ways such as the 'virtual' program to help reach more [patients](#)," said Dr. Andrew Ignaszewski, cardiologist lead at St. Paul's Hospital and a co-author.

With the success of this project, researchers are looking to implement the program into standard health care.

More information: The abstract is available online:
www.circ.ahajournals.org/cgi/content/full/127/10/1615-1622

Provided by Simon Fraser University

Citation: Virtual rehabilitation can reduce heart disease risk, study finds (2014, October 1) retrieved 15 July 2023 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-10-virtual-heart-disease.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is

provided for information purposes only.