

Cardio and weight training reduces access to health care in seniors

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Credit: University of British Columbia

Forget apples – lifting weights and doing cardio can also keep the doctors away, according a new study by researchers at the University of British Columbia and Vancouver Coastal Health Research Institute.

The study, published today in the online journal *PLOS ONE*, followed 86 women, aged 70- to 80-years-old, who were randomly assigned to participate in [weight training](#) classes, outdoor walking classes, or balance and toning classes (such as yoga and pilates) for six months. All participants have [mild cognitive impairment](#), a well-recognized risk factor for Alzheimer's disease and dementia.

The researchers tabulated the total costs incurred by each participant in accessing a variety of [health care resources](#).

"We found that those who participated in the cardio or weight training program incurred fewer health care resources – such as doctor visits and lab tests – compared to those in the balance and toning program," says Jennifer Davis, a postdoctoral

fellow and lead author of the study.

The study is the latest in a series of studies that assess the efficacy of different types of training programs on cognitive performance in elderly patients. An earlier study, published in February in the *Journal of Aging Research*, showed aerobic and weight training also improved [cognitive performance](#) in study participants. Those on balance and toning programs did not.

"While balance and toning exercises are good elements of an overall health improvement program, you can't 'down-dog' your way to better [brain health](#)," says Teresa Liu-Ambrose, an Associate Professor in the UBC Faculty of Medicine and a member of the Brain Research Centre at UBC and VCH Research Institute. "The new study also shows that cardio and weight training are more cost-effective for the health care system."

Exercise benefits for the brain

The new studies build on previous research by Prof. Liu-Ambrose, Canada Research Chair in Physical Activity, Mobility, [Cognitive Neuroscience](#) and a member of the Centre for Hip Health & Mobility, where she found that once- or twice-weekly weight training may help minimize cognitive decline and impaired mobility in seniors.

Research method

The weight training classes included weighted exercises targeting different muscle groups for a whole-body workout. The aerobic training classes were an outdoor walking program targeted to participants' age-specific target heart rate. The balance and toning training classes were representative of exercise programs commonly available in the community such as Osteofit, yoga, or Tai Chi.

Provided by University of British Columbia

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