

# Vida Network Newsletter

## November 2011



**Save the date! Our 2012 Active Ageing Seminar, held in partnership with the BHF National Centre for Physical Activity & Health, will be on May 2nd, 2012.**

More details to follow soon, in the meantime make sure you put the date in your diary...  
More details will be sent to all Vida Network members in December.

### News - Life Expectancy in the UK

Life expectancy in the UK is now at the highest level on record:

- 78.1 years at birth for males
- 82.1 years at birth for females

At 4.1 years, the UK has the smallest gap between male and female life expectancy across all 27 EU countries.

It is estimated that there were 12,640 centenarians in the UK in 2010; five times the estimate of 2,500 in 1980.

*SOURCE: Office for National Statistics, Older People's Day statistical bulletin (September 29, 2011)*

### Research update – Selling Exercise with Short Term Benefits

We often try to 'sell' exercise by telling people about the longer term health benefits. However, the results of research carried out at the University of Michigan suggest we might have more success if we focus on the more immediate benefits. The researchers found that people who exercise primarily to improve their quality-of-life exercise more regularly than those whose primary goals are related to longer term health.

"The study showed that what an individual espouses as important does not necessarily translate into behaviour," said Michelle Segar, research investigator for the University of Michigan Institute for Research on Women and Gender. "While people say they value health and healthy ageing, those distant benefits don't make exercise compelling enough to fit into their busy lives. A more effective 'hook' is to rebrand exercise to emphasize the immediate benefits that enrich daily living, such as stress reduction and increased vitality. ...By shifting our model from medicine to marketing, we can improve how we sell exercise to the public by using principles like branding."

*SOURCE: International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity, 8:94 (August 31, 2011) [Click for research summary](#)*

### Research update – Laughter & Cardiovascular Health

We all know that if people enjoy themselves during their exercise class, sports event or at the gym, they will keep coming back week after week. Now it turns out that laughter itself is good for our cardiovascular health.

Researchers showed volunteers excerpts from a funny and a stressful film and measured their blood vessel lining (endothelium) during the phases of laughter and mental stress. They found a 30-50% difference in blood vessel diameter between the laughter (when the blood vessel lining expanded) and the stressful scenes (blood vessel constriction).

According to Michael Miller, MD, professor at the University of Maryland School of Medicine and lead investigator for this research, "The magnitude of change we saw in the endothelium after laughing was consistent and similar to the benefit we might see with aerobic exercise or statin use. The endothelium is the first line in the development of atherosclerosis or hardening of the arteries, so it is very possible that laughing on a regular basis may be useful to incorporate as part of an overall healthy lifestyle to prevent heart disease. In other words, eat your veggies, exercise and get a good belly laugh every day."

*SOURCE: ESC Congress 2011 (August 28 and 29, 2011) [Click here for further details](#)*

## Network Member Updates

Dr Dawn Skelton, Reader in Ageing and Health, Glasgow Caledonian University has had an update published on the Cochrane Review for Exercise to Improve Balance in Older People. The summary of the results is available online:

<http://summaries.cochrane.org/CD004963/exercise-for-improving-balance-in-older-people>

Zoe Stevens, ProAct65+ trial administrator in the Research Department of Primary Care & Population Health, UCL, has completed a dissertation based on peer mentor experiences of supporting home-based exercise in the trial. You can read more about this at the Active Aging Community Center (link below) or by emailing: [z.stevens@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:z.stevens@ucl.ac.uk)

<http://www.humankinetics.com/aacc-articles/aacc-articles/senior-peer-mentors-experiences-of-supporting-the-home-based-otago-exercise-programme>



### News from Later Life Training

It was great to see so many Network members at the first Later Life Training conference, held in Manchester in September. There is lots of info about the conference on the LLT website:

<http://www.laterlifetraining.co.uk/after-life-training-conference-1011-sept-2011/>

Later Life Training is about to make available audio recordings of the Otago Strength and Balance Exercises. These will be useful for those who work with older people who are visually impaired - or who want to listen on an MP3 player whilst they exercise. Look out for these on the LLT website.

## How the Vida Network can support you...

The Network is a professional association, bringing together people who are working to promote healthy living, wellbeing and independence amongst older people. We know how many people out there are doing really great work to enable older people through physical activity and other wellness programmes, and our aim is to support and celebrate this work.

Vida Network members include fitness instructors and exercise specialists, researchers, local government officers (physical activity coordinators, sports development and leisure staff), physiotherapists, occupational therapists, public health professionals and many others.

Make sure to let us know about your work – interesting projects; research; training courses, conferences and other events; job opportunities – anything which you think will be of interest to other Network members. We may be able to publish it in our next newsletter, or get the news out via social networking (facebook/ twitter/ linkedin). Our contact details are below – please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Looking forward to hearing from you, Claudine Aherne (founder, Vida Network)

Contact the Vida Network team

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