

Network Newsletter: Summer 2011



Welcome to our latest newsletter. Read on for some of the latest research and news from the world of active ageing.

Start Active, Stay Active – New Physical Activity Recommendations

July 11th saw the launch of “Start Active, Stay Active”, the new UK physical activity recommendations from our Chief Medical Officers. We now have specific recommendations for older people (classed in this document as 65 years and over). Most of us working in the area of active ageing have been pushing the 5 x 30 physical activity message for some time. We now have extra ammunition as the guidelines – for the first time – specifically recommend strength exercises for older people (at least twice a week), balance exercises for those at risk of falls (twice a week) and a reduction in time spent sitting throughout the day.

This is good news for those of us who run specialist exercise classes where people can achieve both the strength and balance requirements by attending 2 classes a week. We will now be able to use this evidence in our publicity. We should note that the report does not suggest that people can only achieve the strength and balance guidelines from structured exercise classes (“activities that require hard muscle work such as gardening, badminton, tennis, stair climbing, hill walking, cycling and dance can also help maintain or even improve strength”). For many older people an active lifestyle will not be adequate to achieve these recommendations, unless they attend classes or follow programmes specifically designed around their needs. We know that through our classes older people learn correct techniques and strategies to increase strength and improve balance, they experience what progress looks like for others and feels like for them. They also benefit from social interaction and the motivational support of their peers and the instructor.

We must be careful to not just recite the new guidelines to people (participants and other professionals) as this risks being overwhelming, rather than inspiring. We need to think about how we can play our part to turn these recommendations into reality and enable more older people to achieve these goals and experience the health benefits of strength and balance exercise. The report emphasizes that any activity is still better than nothing, and that people should gradually work towards achieving the recommendations.

A new message for us to take on and disseminate is that, even for those active individuals who do meet all the recommendations, sedentary behaviour has health risks. As older people are sedentary for an average of 10 of their daily waking hours, we need to advise people to reduce overall time spent sitting and to break up remaining sedentary behaviour with short bouts of activity (eg. walking up the stairs each time the TV adverts come on).

The full report is available on the Department of Health Website.

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_128209

What do you think about these new recommendations, what ideas for implementation do you have? How will you use them to motivate current participants or to encourage new people to join in your classes and programmes?

Congratulations to Claudine Aherne, founder of the Vida Network, on her new arrival! Max was born on June 29th, weighing 9lbs 10oz. Mother and baby are both doing well. Max is keeping Claudine pretty active as one of the only ways to keep him from exercising his lungs too much is to take him out for a long walk...



** Did you know we see ourselves in general as 15 years younger than we are! **

Active Ageing Seminar 2011

June 22nd, London

Following the success of last year's event, the Active Ageing Seminar 2011 was held in London this June. This event was hosted by the BHF National Centre for Physical Activity & Health and Vida Wellness, and sponsored by HUR Health & Fitness and Later Life Training.

Delegates learnt from marketing experts, fitness professionals and older adults themselves. There was the opportunity to try out the great HUR Labs iBalance Plus Platform, and plenty of time for valuable networking.

Bob Laventure started the day off by acknowledging Alison Morby (of Kirklees Council). Alison received a CBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours this year, for services to older people and public health. She has been instrumental in developing a programme for elderly people in using activity to help maintain flexibility, quality of life and independence. This is a wonderful personal acknowledgement for Alison and great recognition for our industry, helping to spread the word about all the worthwhile active ageing work happening up and down the country.

Our first speaker, Jennifer Banks-Smith, left us with tips about the new commissioning market. She stressed that, as our business is about behavioural change, we need to have data that demonstrates results on this front in order to successfully bid for commissioned projects.

Peter Gilheany from Forster AGENCY shared key insights into the world of older consumers, based on their most recent research. His primary message was that we should be marketing by attitude, not by age (the former defines people much more than the latter). Forster has developed a segmentation model of older consumers and Peter presented this from a marketing point of view. Delegates followed this with a discussion on how they could apply these learnings to their work.

To finish the day, two delightful participants shared their personal perspectives with us. One requested that we all ask our clients on our first meeting how they would like to be addressed, "please don't assume it is OK to call us by our first name, it can be seen as a sign of disrespect or even contempt, so please ask us..."

Thank you to the team from Vida Wellness, the BHF National Centre, all our speakers and the delegates who made this such an interesting and inspiring event.

