



UBC research finds e-health resource '*Don't Change Much*' improves men's health behaviours with or without fitness facilities

Men who regularly used a free web resource, *DontChangeMuch.ca*, made significantly more health changes than men who did not, finds a new study from the University of British Columbia and Intensions Consulting.

"We believe we have 'cracked the code' to engaging large numbers of men online which has been an elusive goal for health care," says Wayne Hartrick, founding president of the CMHF. "Because many men avoid healthy basics, like nutrition and activity and seeing the doctor regularly, men's poor health is costing Canada about \$37 billion in lost productivity and health care costs. Now, for the first time, we have research that shows our humorous, guy-friendly 'don't change much' blend of a marketing-driven programming, based on unbiased, evidence-based research works."

The research [study](#) compared differences in behaviour among 863 men who accessed an e-health resource and a benchmark sample of 2,000 Canadian men who had not. They found 75 per cent of regular users of the site reported improving their eating habits, and 70 per cent said they were engaging in more sports or exercise.

In addition, 58 per cent said they recently made an effort to sit less and walk more, and almost half (46 per cent) lost weight. 45 per cent said they had cut back on alcohol consumption.

"Men are more likely to die from clogged arteries and heart disease and live an average of nine years of their lives in extremely poor health," says study lead author John Oliffe, a nursing professor who leads the men's health program at UBC. "Free e-health resources can help men access information and resources that they may otherwise be unable to, and the positive changes in their health can ripple out to benefit their families and society."

The resource, *DontChangeMuch.ca* was launched in 2014 by the Canadian Men's Health Foundation (CMHF) to start a men's health movement by engaging them in large numbers online. It provides exercise tips, health advice and other resources.

"e-health sites like this are particularly relevant for men during the COVID-19 lockdown, and potentially into the future as an alternative to physical facilities. They can choose and freely use content that is relevant and timely for them, any time they want," said study co-author Nick Black, managing partner of Intensions Consulting.

“We have long recognized the huge, unnecessary burden of men’s poor health. It is a missing piece of the family health puzzle so we need to change men’s behaviours en masse,” says study co-author Dr. Larry Goldenberg, a professor of urologic sciences at UBC and founding chair of CMHF. “Waiting until they show up at the doctor’s office in crisis is not the way to go. Making early, positive changes improves their lives, their families’ lives and reduces the strain on our healthcare systems.”

“Men like it online, they like humour, they like being able to control what information they get, they like the anonymity,” says Hartrick. “This is critically important because e-health can be scaled to engage many more men than in traditional health settings.”

Peter Baker, Director of the UK-based Global Action for Men’s Health, a collaborative project that includes organizations like CMHF, says, “Many men’s unhealthy and risky behaviours are a worldwide problem and new solutions are urgently needed. *Don’t Change Much* confirms the global potential of digital technologies to nudge men towards healthier behaviours. An approach they can relate to can help to reduce unnecessary chronic disease, lessen suffering and early deaths, and cut the costs of treatment.”

Juggy Sihota, VP of Consumer Health at TELUS and a board member of CMHF, says, “Innovative digital health platforms such as DontChangeMuch.ca is an excellent example of how we can effectively support and empower more Canadians across a diverse set of demographics to take care of their health and improve overall health outcomes without a significant investment.”

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