

Story from the Field

Sallie Beth Johnson - Carilion Clinic

At Carilion Clinic, a non-profit integrated healthcare delivery system, based in Roanoke, VA, great work is being done in spreading the health benefits of physical activity to patients and healthcare employees through the use of a physician referral, exercise prescription program (FIT Rx). The current system was influenced and modeled after Exercise Is Medicine®. As a medically-supervised program, FIT Rx includes a pre-post fitness assessment, six personal training sessions, a 60-days for \$60 wellness center membership, and physician feedback. Since its inception in 2011, more than 4,000 patients have been referred by their physicians. The current referral system is set up through the health system's electronic health record (EHR), creating an efficient and convenient pathway for the physical activity prescription to occur. Recently, EHR access was provided to personal trainers to document session activity. "Integrating the FIT Rx referral into the EHR has improved our referral process and supports a team-based care approach for on-going communication and follow-up by physicians," states Bud Grey, Carilion Clinic Vice President of Wellness.



In 2013, practitioners from Carilion Wellness and the Carilion Clinic Department of Family & Community Medicine adapted the FIT Rx program to help address obesity among healthcare employees. The new iteration, FIT Rx 90, includes a nutrition component and a 90-day wellness center membership, along with physical activity programming to support weight loss. An integrated, research-practice partnership formed between Virginia Tech and Carilion to evaluate the FIT Rx 90 program and develop a six-month weight loss maintenance phase. Over the past three years, the partnership has conducted a series of trials testing the integration of behavioral strategies, financial incentives, and a mobile fitness app to improve weight loss outcomes and increase physical activity participation. "Our partnership trials have provided a rapid learning opportunity for the value of enhancing physician referral exercise prescription programs with evidence-based behavior change strategies", reports Sallie Beth Johnson, a PhD candidate at Virginia Tech and adjunct faculty at Jefferson College of Health Sciences. Ms. Johnson's research is helping guide future programming of lifestyle management for patients and healthcare employees.

For more information about Carilion's exercise prescription programs and integrated research-practice partnership activities, contact Patrick Dunham, Carilion Wellness Clinical Training Fitness Manager, at pmdunham@carilionclinic.org.