

of new program practices aimed at increasing access and adherence to physical activity for Veterans wherever they live, and improving their overall health and wellness. This consortium has served over 7000 Veterans. The first paper describes the impact of overweight/obesity on functional outcomes. The second abstract describes a newly developing use of live video connection from an exercise leader directly to the home for exercise. The third paper provides a case series on the impact of Gerofit on fall prevention. The fourth paper describes the impact of Gerofit on physical function among Veterans with arthritis. The fifth paper describes the impact of Gerofit on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms among participating Veterans with self-reported PTSD. This symposium highlights the impact of a highly synergistic network working together to improve the lives of older Veterans.

GEROFIT: IMPACT ON PTSD SYMPTOMS AMONG PARTICIPATING VETERANS WITH SELF-REPORTED PTSD

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Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) increases risk of medical comorbidities in aging. The Gerofit Program is an exercise program for older Veterans that shows efficacy for physical health. We sought to determine its impact on PTSD. Veterans in Gerofit completed a self-report questionnaire at 3 and 6 months assessing effect of Gerofit on: PTSD symptoms generally, disturbing dreams, avoidance, negative feelings, and irritability. Two hundred twenty-nine Veterans completed the questionnaire. Of these, 56 (24.5%) reported PTSD. None reported worsened PTSD following Gerofit participation. At 3 months, >50% of Veterans reported symptom improvement and this was maintained over 6 months for all items ($p > 0.05$ paired t-test). There was an increase between 3 and 6 months in the percentage who reported "improved a lot" for overall symptoms (16.7% to 22.2%), negative feelings (5.6% to 11.1%) and irritability (0% to 11.1%). Gerofit may offer an effective intervention to improve PTSD symptoms in older Veterans.

SIX MONTHS OF GEROFIT RESULTS IN MOBILITY IMPROVEMENTS IN OLDER VETERANS REGARDLESS OF BMI CLASSIFICATION

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Older Veterans represent a unique population at high risk for mobility limitations. They are also more likely to be overweight or obese when compared to the general population. We sought to compare changes in mobility function across the obesity spectrum in older Gerofit participants at

six different sites. Two-hundred and seventy Veterans (mean age: 74 years) completed six-months of Gerofit participation and mobility assessments at baseline, three and six months. Our assessments included gait-speed, six-minute walk distance, 30-second chair stands, and the eight foot up and go. When comparing weight groups, we found no significant interaction of weight and time, however we found clinically significant ($P < 0.02$) improvements of 7-20% across all mobility measures. Six-months of Gerofit participation appears to be one way to improve mobility function in older Veterans across the weight spectrum.

MODERNIZING EXERCISE WITH TELE-VIDEO TO REACH A RURAL GERIATRIC POPULATION OF VETERANS

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Rural Veterans often lack access to health care. Veterans Affairs (VA) supports telehealth technologies to provide services remotely that are comparable to onsite in-person care. We piloted VA Video Connect (VVC), to deliver an interactive exercise program for Veterans modeled on the VA Gerofit Program, a successful facility-based exercise program. VVC connects an exercise physiologist directly to the home with smart devices. Invitations to join Gerofit were mailed to 216 rural Veterans. Of 17 respondents, 7 (mean age 68) agreed to VVC tele-exercise 1x week for 12 weeks. Two Veterans were lost to follow-up prior to enrollment. Baseline VVC assessments (N=5) were indicative of high functional impairment in comparison to age-based norms: 2-minute step test (67.2 steps, 5th%tile), 30-second chair stands (12.4 stands, 26th%tile), and 30-second arm curls (15.3 curls, 25th%tile). Feasibility, barriers, and program impact will be discussed. Functional impairment indicates need for telehealth to reach Rural Veterans.

THE IMPACT OF 3 MONTHS OF SUPERVISED EXERCISE ON CHANGE IN FUNCTION: COMPARISONS BY ARTHRITIS STATUS

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