

Bringing Research to LIFE

Upcoming Events

Café Scientifique

Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia - New Discoveries and Options for Patients

Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia (CLL) is a cancer of the white blood cells. It is the mostly widely diagnosed type of leukemia in the Western world, mostly affecting older men and has a poor survival rate. As the Baby Boomer generation grows older, the incidence of CLL will increase.

In the new era of personalized medicine, what new diagnostic tests will improve detection at the earliest stages? What research discoveries will pave the way to new treatments and improve survivorship? What clinical trials are being conducted in Manitoba?

Join us in a lively and open discussion on CLL with Canada's leading scientists, clinicians, patient advocates and nurses on this important disease.

Experts:

Dr. Versha Banerji
Dr. James B Johnston
Dr. Aaron Marshall
Dan Skwarchuk
Dr. Cynthia Toze

Moderator:

Dr. Spencer Gibson

Tuesday, Oct. 3, 2012, 7:00 pm
McNally Robinson Booksellers
1120 Grant Avenue – Event Atrium

RSVP to:
Research_Communications@
umanitoba.ca

Undergraduate Research Poster Competition

Nov. 1, 2012

The Manitoba Rooms 210-224
University Centre,
Fort Garry Campus

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION:

Oct. 12, 2012

The psychology of exercising Researcher demonstrates the power of perception



Photo by Luc Desjardins

Figuring out ways to integrate physical activity into our daily lives will help turn exercise motivation into action, says psychology professor Dan Bailis, who sometimes rides his bike to work. More than most of us think, getting or staying fit will benefit, not encroach on other goals.

BY KATIE CHALMERS-BROOKS For The Bulletin

It doesn't take much to derail even the most motivated person from getting some exercise, according to recent research by social psychologist Dan Bailis. But he insists it doesn't mean they're lazy — they might be suffering from goal conflict.

This happens when we think the effort it takes to stay in shape will impede our chances for success in other areas.

"There is this element of distress that's provoked just by being reminded of something else when you've chosen to exercise," Bailis says.

During the last three years he has done at least a dozen studies involving more than 1,000 undergrad students deemed highly motivated to be fit. The students were separated into groups and all of them directed to follow the basic, daily recommended doses of physical activity: 30 to 60 minutes most days of the week. Depending on the experiment, some of the students were then reminded of other goals likely important to them, either relating to academics or romantic relationships.

These reminders were unassuming and presented in the form of pamphlets, videos or tasks. Some students were asked to write a brief summary of their academic pursuits, or to complete a word-search puzzle that had them finding nouns like professor and exam.

"These really subtle reminders are still enough to produce some surprising effects," says Bailis, whose research so far has been funded by the Social

Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and Sport Canada. "In the week following, people who have been put through a goal conflict will exercise less. Even in the few minutes after they're done a task, their mood and self esteem temporarily gets worse."

In one experiment, each student group was given a different pamphlet to read. One group received a brochure that touted the importance of relationships to health, simply reminding participants of their alternate goal. Another group read that relationships and exercise are good for their health; and a third group learned how their relationships could actually benefit from exercising.

The students that exercised the most in subsequent days belonged to the last group, those who were told of the mutual, non-conflicting benefits. Perception is powerful, Bailis says, and even extends to inanimate objects we associate with breaking a sweat.

Some of the students were given free water bottles under the guise of winning a random prize. When asked one week later: could the researcher buy back the bottle and what would they charge? Those in the goal-conflict condition of the experiment priced the bottle 37 per cent below those in the control condition. "Your running gear, your sweats, the gym you go to — these things are acquiring emotional significance by being paired with goal conflict and it becomes a turnoff and you don't want to interact with these things anymore," says Bailis.

Insight into the psychology underlying our exercise habits provides

clues on how to best market physical activity to a society faced with climbing obesity rates. It's unknown how many people struggle with goal conflict, Bailis notes. In population surveys, the most commonly given reasons for not being active are by far: "lack of time," "too busy" and "other commitments." Raising awareness of the health benefits of exercise has its place but reaching people who are already convinced of the latter requires a different message, one that addresses goal conflict specifically, he says.

"What's needed is a message that helps people to see exercise as an integrated part of their life, that pursuing it does not harm other things that they are trying to do," says Bailis. "I'm looking for more diversity of messages."

And a moratorium on the term couch potato.

"If people are not exercising, chances are, they are still making productive use of their time. The real challenge for this field of exercise research and promotion is to acknowledge the other worthy goals that people are trying to protect with their choices. People want to be ready to meet the needs of their families, jobs, schooling, relationships, and so on," he says.

"Exercise, in fact, can be a positive part of all of those things, but it often appears to be in an unwinnable contest with each of them first. That perception, more than anything to do with raising awareness of health benefits, is what I think public education about exercise should be trying to change."