

Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and Faculties in Scotland

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Major NHS action needed to tackle physical inactivity – say Scottish medical leaders

27 January 2015

The NHS needs to step up and do more to tackle physical inactivity claims a new report published today (Thursday 29 January) by leading doctors from the Scottish Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and Faculties.

The group, which represents doctors from across 15 different medical bodies in Scotland, has delivered their recommendations to the Scottish Government.

Recommendations highlighted in the document include:

- By the end of 2016, every GP in Scotland should have the training and mechanisms to give their patients advice and interventions for physical inactivity, in the same manner as is currently delivered for smoking and alcohol
- By mid 2016, all hospital assessments will include questions about physical activity levels and diet alongside questions about smoking and alcohol
- By the end of 2016, every person entering the care system will have their physical activity levels assessed
- By the end of 2015, all medical schools in Scotland will include educational sessions on physical activity and health behaviour change
- By the end of 2015, all Scottish hospitals will have clearly defined walking routes from the hospital to enable staff, patients and visitors to exercise

The group say that healthcare leaders in policy, medical education, health boards, hospitals, and Royal Colleges must renew their focus on tackling physical inactivity and that increasing knowledge of the required levels of physical activity among the public is imperative. The group support the UK Chief Medical Officers recommendation of 150 minutes of physical activity a week for adults and 60 minutes a day for school children.

Mr Ian Ritchie, Chair of the Scottish Academy, and President of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh said:

“Scotland’s life expectancy is the lowest in Western Europe. Physical inactivity, obesity, smoking and alcohol excess cause quarter of all deaths and the evidence about the scale of the problem of physical inactivity cannot be ignored. Even this month a major European study concluded that twice as many people die each year due to inactivity than from obesity. It also plays a major role in the

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development of over 40 diseases like heart attacks, type 2 diabetes, some types of cancer, depression and dementia, while conservative estimates state that more than 2500 Scots per year die due to inactivity.

“The Scottish Academy’s view is clear that the priorities of doctors should not only be to provide excellent treatment of disease when it occurs, but in parallel, to do more as a health service and as professionals to promote health and prevent disease. The NHS provides world-class medical treatments, but at its core is the word “Health” and we can, should and will help boost physical activity levels in Scotland by prioritising this important area more. ”

Dr Andrew Murray, Cruden Clinical Leadership Fellow at the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons Glasgow added:

“This report contains common sense, cost effective, concrete recommendations that we aim to work with doctors, nurses, all health professionals, health boards, universities, and the Scottish Government amongst others to implement. These include:

- how to assess physical activity levels and offer advice to increase physical activity in all medical and healthcare curriculums
- make assessing and advising about physical activity levels a routine part of care in hospitals and communities, like checking blood pressure, and smoking status
- providing opportunities in our hospitals and NHS settings for patients and staff to be active, including providing walking routes to every hospital in Scotland
- providing quality information for our patients about the benefits of physical activity, and to be active in every hospital and community setting

Many of our patients are surprised given the health benefits that these actions are not already happening routinely. Although great steps have been taken in the last five years, as an NHS in Scotland we are still a long way from achieving this and the Scottish Academy are committed to help make them happen”.

The (acting) Chief Medical Officer for Scotland Aileen Keel CBE added:

‘The Scottish Government recognises that increasing physical activity levels in Scotland is a top health priority. We need the help of doctors and other health care professionals to get this on the public’s agenda. All clinicians have the knowledge and skills to promote health as well as to treat illness, and they should be raising lifestyle risk factors, such as physical inactivity, with patients. It is a myth to say that it takes more than a couple of minutes to do this in a consultation, and the impact of a doctor raising these issues, as the evidence shows, can be very powerful. The Scottish Government welcomes this report and will review its specific recommendations and work together with the Academy to fully embed physical activity for health into health and social care in Scotland.’

ENDS

Images available:

- Type 2 diabetes patients and doctors participating in “Clinicians on the Clyde 5k”

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- Stock walking/sports images

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Notes to editors

The Scottish Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and Faculties coordinates joint working between the Medical Royal Colleges and Faculties in Scotland and provides a collective voice on clinical and professional matters. Members of the group are:

- College of Emergency Medicine
- Faculties of Dental Surgery
- Faculty of Occupational Medicine
- Faculty of Public Health
- Royal College of Anaesthetists
- Royal College of General Practitioners
- Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists
- The Royal College of Ophthalmologists
- Royal College of Pathologist
- Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow
- Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh
- Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh
- Royal College of Psychiatrists
- Royal College of Radiologists
- Scottish Committee of Royal College of Paediatric and Child Health