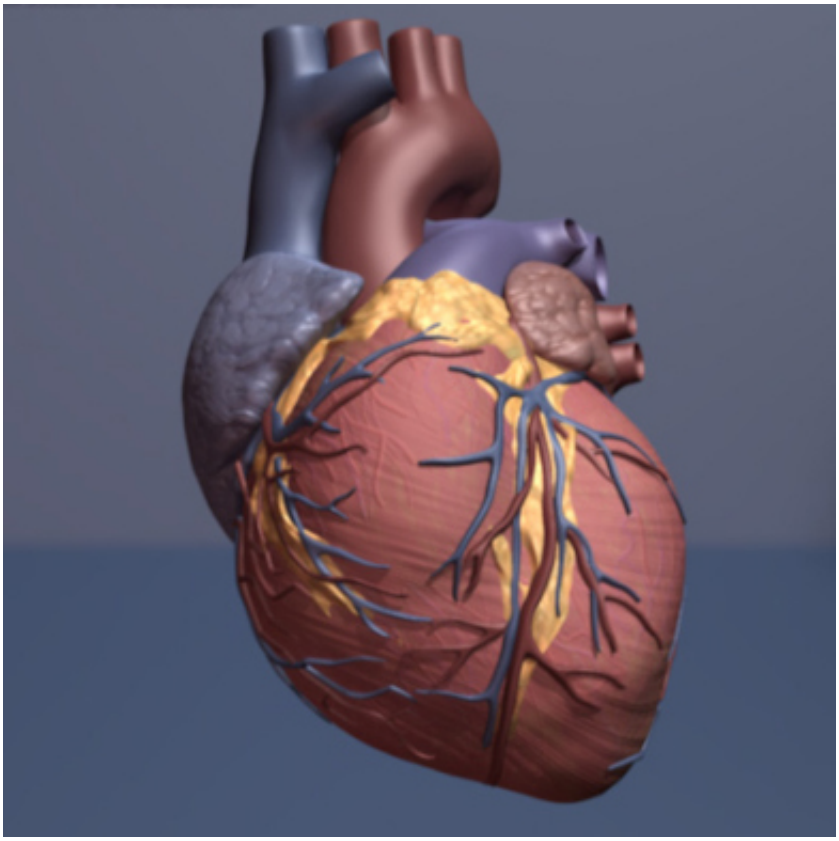
Medical Xpress

Cardiorespiratory fitness needs to be measured in clinical practice, researcher says

November 28 2016, by Anne Craig



Human heart. Credit: copyright American Heart Association

A new Scientific Statement from the American Heart Association led by Queen's University professor Robert Ross provides unequivocal evidence to confirm that cardiorespiratory fitness (CRF), a reflection of overall cardiovascular health, should be measured in clinical practice to

provide additional information for patient management.

Decades of research have shown that CRF is a stronger predictor of mortality than established risk factors such as cigarette smoking, hypertension, high cholesterol, and type 2 diabetes, and that low levels of CRF are associated with a high risk of cardiovascular disease, and mortality rates attributable to various cancers.

In addition to improved cardiovascular outcomes, higher levels of CRF are associated with improved outcomes for certain forms of cancer, surgical risk, dementia, Alzheimer's disease, depression and Type 2 diabetes.

"Routine estimation of CRF in clinical practice is no more difficult than measuring blood pressure," says Dr. Ross (School of Kinesiology and Health Studies). "The addition of CRF for risk classification presents health professionals with unique opportunities to improve patient management and encourage lifestyle-based strategies designed to reduce cardiovascular risk."

This research aims to establish the foundation to incorporate cardiorespiratory fitness measurements into standard clinical practice.

"The evidence reviewed by our writing group clearly demonstrates that more than half the reduction in cardiovascular disease mortality occurs in response to a very modest increase in CRF. This is good news as for many people, moderate levels of physical activity consistent with current recommendations may be all that is needed to derive a clinically significant benefit for habitually sedentary individuals."

The research was published in *Circulation*.

More information: Robert Ross et al. Importance of Assessing

Cardiorespiratory Fitness in Clinical Practice: A Case for Fitness as a Clinical Vital Sign: A Scientific Statement From the American Heart Association, *Circulation* (2016). DOI: 10.1161/CIR.0000000000000461