

# Primary care exercise counseling cost-effective for older men

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(HealthDay)—For older male veterans, improvements in physical

activity and rapid gait speed can be obtained at a relatively low cost relative to patient annual health care costs, according to a study published online Feb. 2 in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*.

Patricia A. Cowper, Ph.D., from the Duke Clinical Research Institute in Durham, N.C., and colleagues conducted an economic assessment of a primary care-based [physical activity](#) counseling intervention that improved [physical activity levels](#) and rapid gait speed in 398 older male veterans (aged  $\geq 70$  years). Intervention costs were examined, and [health care](#) resource use and costs were estimated through one year of follow-up.

The researchers found that per participant, the total direct cost of the intervention was \$459; 85 percent of which was counselor effort. Program cost totaled \$696 per participant with overhead. During follow-up, medical costs reached \$10,418 with the intervention, compared with \$12,052 with usual care (difference,  $-\$1,634$ ; 95 percent confidence interval,  $-\$4,683$  to  $\$1,416$ ;  $P = 0.29$ ). In terms of short-term clinical outcomes, the intervention cost \$4,971 or \$4,640 per additional patient reaching the target exercise level or per patient achieving a clinically significant change in rapid gait speed, respectively.

"Improvements in physical activity and rapid gait speed in the physical activity counseling group were obtained at a cost that represents a small fraction of patients' annual [health care costs](#)," the authors write.

**More information:** [Full Text \(subscription or payment may be required\)](#)

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