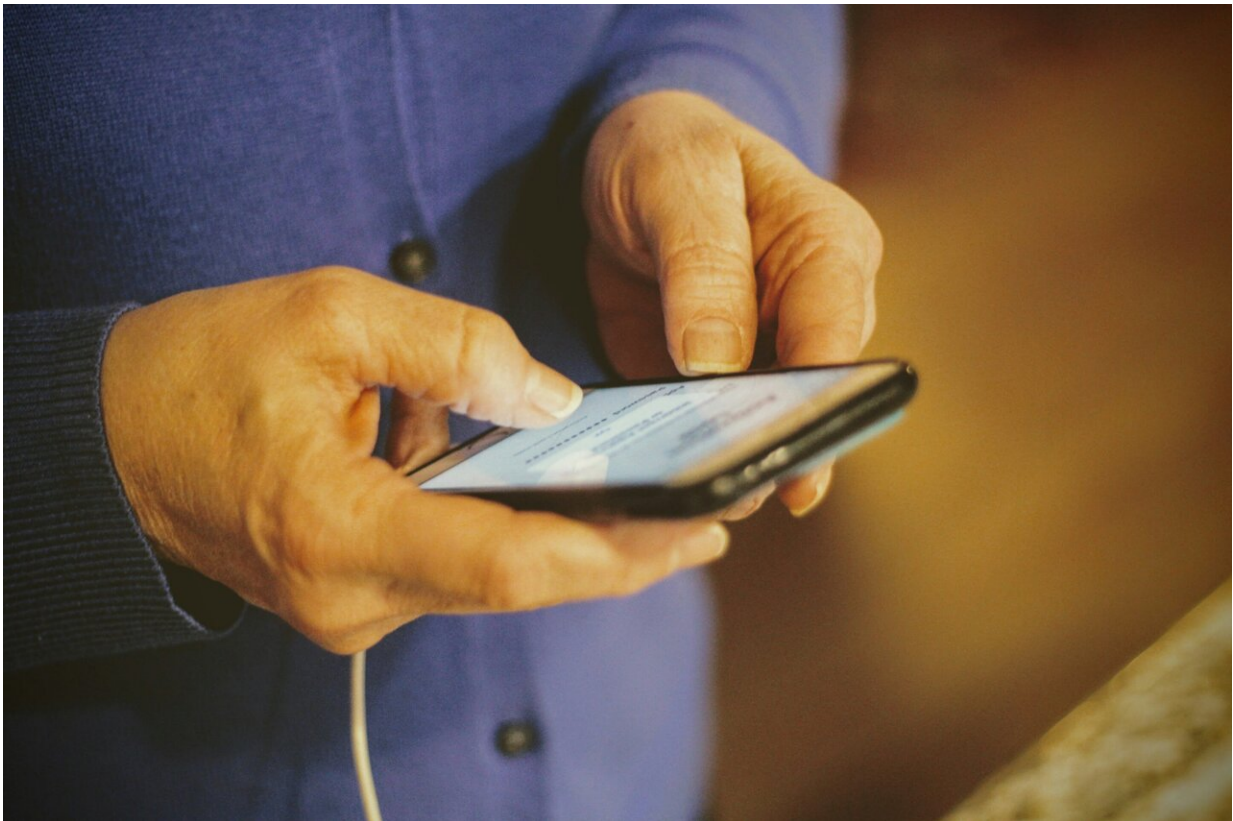


Exercise apps do not meet older people's needs, according to study

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In a context in which physical exercise is considered a key factor in healthy aging, a group of researchers led by the physiotherapist at the Parc Sanitari Pere Virgili health complex Luis Soto, working with

experts in digital health at the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC), examined mobile applications for exercise available in the leading app stores. Their objective was to establish their usefulness for the online prescription of physical exercise and to determine whether they are adapted to older people's needs.

The work is [published](#) in the journal *Age and Ageing*.

"Based on the current scientific evidence, we always recommend increasing physical exercise, performing strength exercises and, above all, reducing sedentary behavior. Doing exercise is obviously better than not doing it, but as professionals we must be able to optimize and adapt our prescription in terms of intensity, volume, frequency and progression," explained Soto.

"The completely new aspect of this study, which has been published by the journal of the British Geriatrics Society, lies in the fact that it's a [systematic review](#), which uses the most rigorous methods for searching for, classifying and analyzing applications, but it's based on the marketplaces for apps on our phones, and not on purely scientific databases and search engines. This means it provides information about the apps that are available to us and which many people we know are probably using," said Ph.D. Marco Inzitari, Director of Integrated Care and Research at the Parc Sanitari Pere Virgili, and a researcher in the Faculty of Health Sciences and the eHealth Center at the UOC.

No app is adapted to cognitive function

The study analyzed 15 of the more than 8,000 [physical exercise](#) applications available in Apple's App Store and Google's Play Store that met the following criteria for inclusion: downloaded more than 10,000 times, aimed at older people, updated in the last three years, in English and not exclusive to any specific discipline.

"We found a limited range of apps for this user profile, and we believe that the ones that are available could be better adapted to the needs of frail older people in terms of both prescribing exercise and in their ease of use, thereby empowering them in the process," explained the project's principal investigator.

The analysis found no apps that were adapted to users' cognitive needs. According to the researchers, an app aimed at older people needs to be simple, intuitive and focused on their needs. For this reason, they believe it is essential to include the end users of the apps in the creation processes, and above all, to involve older people from different backgrounds and with different levels of tech skills.

"Technology can help us, but it needs to be reviewed quantitatively and qualitatively. The objective of the study was to obtain a qualitative perspective (while also taking into account the scientific evidence) of apps that professionals could use for prescribing exercise for frail [older people](#)," added Soto.

Finally, in their analysis the researchers found that [only one](#) of the 15 apps was based on [scientific evidence](#).

More information: Luis Soto-Bagaria et al, Mobile applications to prescribe physical exercise in frail older adults: review of the available tools in app stores, *Age and Ageing* (2023). [DOI: 10.1093/ageing/afad227](#)

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