A mobile app to discover green routes and promote healthy aging

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The aim of the citizen science project Every Walk You Take, promoted by a team from the University of Barcelona, is to promote active and healthy aging of citizens through a new mobile application that shows walking routes through green areas in Barcelona with data on geolocation, obstacles, pollution and weather in real time.

This initiative aims to promote physical activity and health among the over-55 population through a new mobile-assisted health intervention (mHealth).

This innovative app, presented in an article published in Sustainability, provides new digital tools for Barcelona’s citizens to become actively and directly involved in their health care.

In addition, the app can also be implemented in different cities around the world committed to citizen participation and community health.

Every Walk You Take is an initiative of experts from the UB's Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences and the Faculty of Mathematics and Computer Science, with the participation of teaching teams and students from the Adult Education Centers (CFA) of the Bon Pastor and Trinitat Vella neighborhoods and social, cultural and health agents from the Sant Andreu district.

The new proposal is part of the IMPETUS project to support citizen and participatory science initiatives.
Bon Pastor and Trinitat Vella: Citizen science and participation

Physical inactivity is the fourth leading cause of death worldwide and generates a high health and economic cost, a factor that must be added to the progressive aging of the population.

"This project has allowed us to interact with many agents in the Trinitat Vella and Bon Pastor neighborhoods through the adult education centers in both areas.

"The active collaboration of teachers and students from these centers has been decisive in testing the prototype of the application in this participatory science initiative," says Grau, who is a member of the August Pi i Sunyer Biomedical Research Institute (IDIBAPS) and the Consortium for Biomedical Research in Epidemiology and Public Health Network (CIBERESP).

The new mobile app, which allows for personalized routes, was developed at the UB's Faculty of Mathematics and Computer Science "as a final-year project by students Albert Pérez and Marc Serrajordi," says Laura Igual, a lecturer at the faculty and co-director of the project.

The app invites users to discover healthy itineraries in the city and contains information on parks, pedestrian lanes and streets, as well as environmental variables (air quality and weather) and personal preferences (difficulty of the route, distance, etc.). Users also have the option to take photos and include voice notes to identify barriers and features of each route.

Physical activity, health and socialization
Today, more than 20% of the EU population is aged 65 and over, and projections suggest that by 2100 the proportion will increase to 31.3%. In this context, initiatives such as the Every Walk You Take project are in line with actions aimed at promoting physical activity and health in the population to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In this context, Every Walk You Take is presented as a leading mHealth intervention to identify barriers and enablers to active living for people over the age of 55. It involves citizens in the changes in the city, invites older people to be part of the progress and is a pioneering example of new models of health monitoring that generate benefits in physical activity, physical and mental health and socialization of the participants.

In addition, the personalized routes invite people to discover urban landscapes or green spaces, and help to make walks more pleasant and stimulating, influencing the attitude of citizens to adopt more active lifestyles.

"In the future, the idea is to expand the project in a phase in which more municipalities from all over Spain and Europe will participate, to create a real network that gives citizens a voice to identify barriers and obstacles on routes to improve their health," concludes María Grau.


Provided by University of Barcelona

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