

# Independent Research Findings

Lifetime Fitness Program®



*Independent research  
demonstrates the  
effectiveness of this  
senior fitness program.*



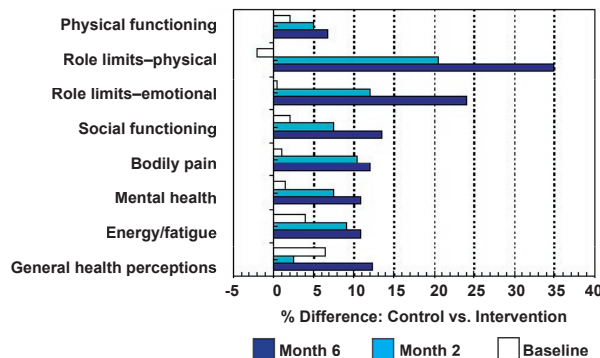
## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND OLDER AMERICANS

Scientific evidence has proven that regular physical activity can bring dramatic health benefits to people of all ages. Physical activity among seniors can extend years of active independent life, reduce disability, and improve the quality of life for older persons. Yet, despite the well-documented social, physical and mental health benefits of activity, at least 60% of adult Americans are not physically active on a regular basis. Physical inactivity is estimated to be responsible for more than 300,000 deaths and \$77 billion in direct health care costs each year.

Dr. Teresa Keenan  
Senior Research Advisor  
AARP

## Researching the Results: The Lifetime Fitness Program Deemed a Success

Researchers at the University of Washington Health Promotion Research Center (HPRC) first designed and piloted the program, now known as the *Lifetime Fitness Program*, as part of a community study at Northshore Senior Center in Seattle. The response from participants was immediate, and overwhelmingly positive. Even before the pilot study ended, participants were requesting to use the Program as a permanent exercise activity in the center. Not only were the seniors excited about participating, but study measures showed that the group improved significantly in almost every dimension tested, from physical and social functioning to levels of pain and depression. The pilot study results (subsequently published in the *Journal of American Geriatric Society*) showed the Program improved overall fitness and health. The *Lifetime Fitness Program* was deemed a success.



Percent (positive) differences in mean adjusted SF-36 subscale scores between control and intervention LFP subjects at baseline, 2 months, and 6 months (adjusted for baseline age, gender, race, marital status, income, education, self-perceived health status, if hospitalized in the past 12 months, and the baseline level of the outcome variable under analysis).

The Lifetime Fitness Program is now offered in more than 50 sites locally and nationally. The HPRC continues to work in concert with LFP's managing partners to evaluate and monitor the Program's effectiveness. This includes ongoing performance testing in order to respond to the aging population's evolving program needs.

### **About these survey questions.**

The following is an excerpt from an exit survey conducted in 2001. A total of 20 Lifetime Fitness Program sites were chosen in western Washington State. Participants were asked to complete a questionnaire about the Program. These are the questionnaire results;

#### ***“Has this program improved your physical abilities?”***

|                     |     |
|---------------------|-----|
| Total surveyed:     | 904 |
| “Great improvement” | 98% |
| “No improvement”    | 2%  |

#### ***“I would take this class again.”***

|                 |     |
|-----------------|-----|
| Total surveyed: | 899 |
| “Yes”           | 99% |
| “No”            | 1%  |

#### ***“This exercise program in general:”***

|                                 |       |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| Total surveyed:                 | 910   |
| “Satisfied” to “very satisfied” | 99.8% |
| “Not satisfied”                 | 00.2% |

#### ***“I would recommend this class to a friend.”***

|                 |     |
|-----------------|-----|
| Total surveyed: | 899 |
| “Yes”           | 99% |
| “No”            | 1%  |

## **The Lifetime Fitness Program Results In Healthcare Savings**

An analysis done by the University of Washington’s Health Promotion Research Center (HPRC) suggests that there is a decrease in the rate of rise in healthcare costs for participants in the Lifetime Fitness Program (LFP). If confirmed by other studies, these findings will have significant implications for those concerned with ways to improve the health of the community while avoiding cost increases.

The study identified 1,114 members of Group Health Cooperative (an area non-profit healthcare system that coordinates care and coverage) who had registered for the Lifetime Fitness Program. These enrollees (case group) were compared with 3,342 age- and gender-matched, non-participating Group Health enrollees (control group 1:3 ratio) for demographic, health, healthcare utilization, and health costs in the periods before and after program entry.

At baseline, the LFP group had slightly higher total healthcare costs: \$4,411 compared to control group total costs of \$3,932. The one-year follow-up showed

a trend toward lower increases in annualized costs for the LFP group during the period following their first participation in a Lifetime Fitness class. A dose-response analysis showed similar savings in cost increases for those with fewer than 120 days of participation and an actual decrease in overall costs for those with more than 120 days of participation. Further analysis suggests a \$7.50 saving for each LFP session attended.

*These results were presented at the 16th National Conference on Chronic Disease Prevention and Control and a related article is pending journal publication.*

For more information regarding analyses of the Lifetime Fitness Program, please see the following:

1. Wallace JJ, Buchner DM, Grothaus L, Leveille S, LaCroix AZ, Wagner EH. Implementation and effectiveness of a community-based health promotion program for older adults. *J Gerontol*, 53: M301-06.
2. LoGerfo, JP, Cheadle, A, Wagner, E, and Sandhu, N. Health Cost Impact of the Lifetime Fitness Program. 16th National Conference on Chronic Disease Prevention and Control. 2002.
3. Ackermann RT, Sandhu N Cheadle A Wagner EH LoGerfo JP. Changes in healthcare costs and utilization after enrollment in a community-based exercise program for older adults. Robert Wood Johnson Meeting. 2002.