



CIHR WALK THE TALK TEAM:

Transforming the Built Environment to Enhance Mobility in Older Adults

In the 2010 Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR) – Institute of Aging New Emerging Team Competition, the *Walk the Talk (WTT) Team* was awarded a six year, \$1.5M grant to study the impact of the built environment on the mobility and health of older adults. The team is based in at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver Coastal Health Research Institute and the Centre for Hip Health and Mobility. While many of the WTT co-investigators, collaborators and advisors are situated in Vancouver the team has wide representation from international institutions and organizations.

Prolonging active and independent living for the aging demographic has been highlighted as an essential strategy for enhancing quality of life, promoting physical health, and reducing dependency on the health care system. There is an increasing body of evidence linking health outcomes with the built environment (BE) – defined broadly as the elements of urban design as well as access to services and amenities. Very few studies address the older adult’s experience with respect to the BE and health. The WTT team will address this gap by undertaking research that evaluates how the BE is associated with older adult mobility – the physical capacity to walk or move within communities. Mobility is the focus as it has obvious impact on health, social inclusion and quality of life outcomes in older adults.

The WTT research program consists of three Research Themes. Theme A is focused on synthesizing the existing knowledge related to our area of focus via a number of systematic reviews. In Theme B, the team will refine and create new tools to evaluate the ‘walkability’ (pedestrian-friendliness) and ‘accessibility’ (access to service and amenities) of different neighbourhoods from an older adults’ perspective. In Theme C, we evaluate the influence of the built environment on older adults’ mobility and quality of life. The WTT research program will link the walkability and accessibility of communities to senior’s mobility and ultimately, to their ability to live independently within their own communities and homes for as long as possible.

In addition to the Research Themes, the team is strongly committed to the knowledge translation and mobilization as well as sustained implementation. This refers to generating research outcomes that have direct applicability and impact through creating new products or programs, influencing policy, and effectively promoting mobility in aging. Consequently, we view community interaction and collaboration as a key focus of our program. Community collaborators are therefore active partners in developing the research questions, influencing study design (to ensure relevance) and as end users to enhance uptake, implementation and dissemination of research outcomes.

For more information contact:

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WALK THE TALK TEAM

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