

# Jo Fellowship Int Final

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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Okay, hello, my name is Joe Blodgett, I'm a research fellow at UCL, I work at the Institute of Sport, Exercise and Health in an epidemiology group. So we do a lot of research using big datasets of cohort studies. So could be 5000, participants could be half a million participants. And we look into things like physical activity, sedentary behaviour, sleep, and how that is associated with different types of health outcomes. The fellowship was a really good opportunity to step outside of the things I do day to day. So I do a lot of data analysis, a lot of the work is focused on research output, so things like papers or grants. But the fellowship really gave a good opportunity to step back and reflect on what the research actually means for the public. And there's a few different ways that that came out. Some of it is looking at how to get the research findings out to the public in a meaningful way others is understanding how research gets into policy or impacts different types of sectors. So a bit of a background to the project is right now, the physical activity guidelines that come from the government tend to be one size fits all. So there, you know, there are specific ones for children. But there are one set of guidelines for all adults aged 18 to 65. And those are slightly tweaked for those aged 65 Plus, but the challenge is that it's one single guidelines, so the government currently recommends two and a half hours per week of moderate to vigorous physical activity. This they also recommend to minimise sedentary time. But these are not targeted. These are not personalised and that can be really difficult when we think about different profiles of people. So there are people who spent all day on their feet working more manual or occupation based based jobs. And so maybe the best thing for them at the end of the day isn't to go out and do more exercise, maybe it actually is better to rest. We can also think about people of different ages, people have different physical abilities, people have different sort of social circumstances. And it really just isn't as simple as trying to get in that exercise each day or cutting down that sedentary time. And cutting down the sedentary time can be particularly tricky when we think about how many people have desk based jobs and sit at a computer all day. So because of this, because of this one size fits all approach to current physical activity recommendations, my team is really interested in better understanding personalised recommendations. So we've done some really interesting analysis that looks at how we spend time across the full 24 hour day. So breaking the day down with picturing a pie chart, you know, how much of your day is spent sitting, how much is spent standing, how much is spent running, how much is spent sleeping, and we look at what happens to your health if we were to change different time spent in one behaviour to another. So for example, if you replaced 10 minutes of your time spent sitting with 10 minutes or going for a light walk, what's the impact on your health. And we've we've kind of conceptualised this as a interactive tool. So could we create a tool where an individual can provide some background information, maybe on their

age, their job, their BMI, give an overview of what their current day is. So maybe they get eight hours sleep, they spend nine hours sitting two hours laying down resting this much going to the gym and breaking it down that way. And then we can give them specific guidance. So that might be five different options of how they can change or reallocate time between activities. And we think this tool would really give people recommendations that are feasible and realistic. So rather than going from zero minutes of exercise a week to two and a half hours, you know what actually happens if they go from zero to 15, or zero to 20. So that was the idea behind the project. And then for the project itself, or initial idea was to help design this app. But what we realised is that some app or tool might not even be the most appropriate way to disseminate this information. So a lot of the research we do is looking at middle and older age adults and so they might not be as keen to use technology in the way that a 20 year old might be who were often less interested in the impact of activity on their their health outcomes or over ageing related health measures. So we partnered with a local, local community organisation in East London called time and talents and we worked with their one of their programme leaders to set up a workshop. And for the workshop, my colleague and I John Michell. He's a PhD student in the Institute of Sport, Exercise and Health. We went over and we delivered an hour and a half workshop. And in this workshop, we wanted to ask these individuals where they currently receive their physical activity advice, what type of things they did, what their day looked like, and where they would want to go to get this advice in the future. And we also asked him to help us design a tool. And it was really interesting, because the group that we met with was an older sample. So they were they range from 65, to about 85. And it was really interesting to hear the perspectives of what type of activity they're currently getting. None of them had heard of the current physical activity guidelines, which really raise raises concerns, and it's something I've come across quite a bit in any any work that I do the public is that people are either surprised that the guidelines exist, or they they know they exist, but they're not sure what they are. And I think this comes down a lot to how they're actually disseminated and how they're spoken about. And really highlights the need to bring them to the forefront. So again, it's about bringing the research that we do and the findings, what we find what we what we want to recommend, well, how can that information be given to the public in a way that they're going to actually use it? In the workshop, we first started talking about what type of activities a lot of them do, and walking was really common. And we also spoke a lot about housework and chores. And it can often be a misconception that physical activity doesn't count unless it's structured exercise. So going for a cycle going for a walk, going to the gym, but it was really important to discuss how things like doing the dishes or doing the laundry or hoovering all countless physical activity. And actually, this is a place where a lot of people are getting their activity. And they spoke a lot about how they liked dancing. And they were really glad to hear that that counted as physical activity. And we had some good discussions about technology and the barriers of technology. And it was really interesting to hear the different range of perspectives, because there were some individuals that were really keen to use the tool, they thought their children would be able to help and they were really happy to get guidance that was reasonable, because they feel that doing two and a half hours a week of moderate to vigorous exercise just wasn't possible. And they didn't believe it. So they there were some people that said, I think the government is wrong. I don't think that's good for me, I know what's best for me. And so yeah, a lot of reluctance for them to



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accept the one size fits all. And I agree with them. I think there were a few of them had various physical disabilities, different social circumstances. And you know, the biggest one, because it was a slightly older group is obviously how their day is currently structured, and what is

realistic for them. So it was really great to work together and, and kind of understand that it isn't just as simple as making an online tool, and then sending it out. It's important to design something that is both online, but also for those who can't access it. How can they go about? Still getting personalised advice, we spoke a lot about what type of people they trusted? Did they trust the GP to get advice from did they trust researchers like myself? Did they trust their family, and it was very varied. And this, this, I think, gave us some hints about different ways we can disseminate the tool and one idea was about having the tool and the GPS office. So I think we've all been in a waiting room or received tablets. But if people are waiting to see the doctor and they're there with a daughter, or a son or a carer, can they use this tool as they're waiting to get some advice on what they can do and how they can change their normal day, I'll share one story, which was really nice. One of the participants was in a wheelchair, but she was really keen to still participate. So they all of the participants signed up it was it was of course not obligatory, and she signed up and wanted to talk about her perspective of physical activity. And it was really interesting to hear about how much she moves within her house and she was saying, you know, she, she hates just sitting not doing anything. So she's constantly moving. And she shared this really nice for Heartland the example of her activity, which is she absolutely loves going to the park with her grandchildren and one of the parks with a trampoline and she'll get out of her wheelchair and just sit on the trampoline and balance and she's She described how she just feels weightless, she feels free and nothing makes her feel happier than that. And it stemmed a really interesting discussion because then a few of the other participants started talking about how they like using swings, and the group kind of went off on a bit of a conversation about how a lot of the activity isn't accessible so they will Don't go to the gym, they're only really getting it walking in the park are going from point A to point B, but that they would love to create a playground for older adults, and they'd love to create something that was safe. But that was fun for them. They just said the most important way that I'll increase my activities, if I'm doing something that's fun. So I think that's definitely an idea for the future is to think about some type of CO production to design a safe playground for older adults. And I think, yeah, that was one of the things that really stood out to me on the day, I joked to the group, I said, Should we stop the workshop and just design a playground and they will all want to. So yeah, I think I'd definitely like to revisit that, it's, it is really rewarding to get out of the office and to go and talk to people to real people. And we went into the community organisation Centre, which was nice as well, because it created



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a really positive and open dynamic, the,



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the participants felt really comfortable, they were really interested to hear what we were doing. And I think it just reminds me how important it is to have this this public input in in everything that we do. And unfortunately, that doesn't happen a lot of the time, especially in research, which involves more data analysis is it's it's based at the University and it doesn't really leave, leave that. But I think there's there's value in it. And so I think my perspective towards embedding the public input into research has, has really crossed now to other projects. So even writing grants, we're getting public representatives to help us read the lay summary. And you can see how interested the public is. And sometimes I worry that people will view research as boring. But that really isn't the case. People want to know, they want to learn they're interested

in the findings are interested in how they can become healthier. But this information just isn't accessible at the time. So I really think the onus on that has to come from researchers, and not from the public, because the public are open to information, we just have to find a way to give it to them in a way that is engaging and stimulating. It's easy to understand. So the short term outputs is that we're writing up the summary of the workshop. And we're going to use that as a blueprint for sort of the design phase. So we want to pursue more funding for a project that will let us build some type of tool. And I think we have enough information from the public as sort of a starting point. But then we're going to carry on this public CO production part of the work. So we might design the tool and then go back to the public and perhaps a different group perhaps the same because they're really keen to see it through to the end, to get their input on tweaking things to make it more accessible to make sure that we're putting it in the right locations to hit the right audience. And then even once we've created this tool, it's is it actually impacting behaviour, are people actually changing their behaviour following the recommendations, because we could build an incredible tool. But it's possible that nobody uses it, or it's possible that people aren't actually changing their behaviour. So it's really important for us to sort of follow through all aspects of law. From a long term perspective, I'm really keen to keep engaging the public in the research that we do. And that comes in a lot of different ways. In the research cycle, I think it's important that researchers recognise it's not just dissemination that's going to involve the public, but we can involve them at all stages. So even coming up with the question, you know, how can we identify meaningful questions that we should spend our time researching? Well, the public can tell us, you know, they, they can tell us what, what they want to know what they don't know, where they need help with? They can they can help us also, in the design of the research, they can help us troubleshoot things, they can help us target the right samples. So yeah, I think it's just important that all researchers and academic institutions, I think we all have an obligation to better embed the public in the work that we do. I think that my top tip would be not to be afraid to get involved with the public. So every single interaction I've had with a public member who's helping with research is so rewarding. And I come out of it feeling inspired, remembering why I do the work that I do. And also just just remembering how important it is to come across as human. And not to come across as too professional too academic, it's really important to make sure that when you meet with the public, that you you, you show them that you believe you're equals, you know, this isn't researchers asking the public for their opinion, but it's really, really important to set it up the way we did, which was setting it up as equals, you know, we have an idea, but we don't want to just create it for you and give it to you. We want you to help us we want to make this tool together. And it's really inspiring One thing for the public to feel that their input is valued. And I think earlier early on in your career, you can be a bit nervous about how you come across but to be honest, it's no different than just interacting someone in your personal life. So I think it's really important for researchers to take off their research hat when they go and meet with the public and and have a look at it that way.