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Email Reminder + Dog = Increased Physical Activity
Human Animal Bond Research Initiative Announces Results of Research Project

(Washington, D.C.) November 14, 2016 – The Human Animal Bond Research Initiative (HABRI) Foundation today announced the results of a study exploring the effects of an email mediated intervention to increase walking in dog owners and non-dog owners, conducted by researchers at Purdue University and published in the journal Clinical Nursing Research.

Findings of the study showed that a simple email intervention sharing the importance of walking and the positive impact of walking on a dog’s health were effective tools to promote walking. These interventions caused participants to increase and maintain dog walking over a 12-month period. Email intervention for non-dog owners also increased weekly minutes of walking compared with baseline measures and control groups, however dog owners accumulated significantly more walking minutes per week than non-dog owners.

“Walking is an easy, accessible way to increase physical activity, which is important for the health of people and their pets,” said the principal investigator on the study, Elizabeth A. Richards, PhD, RN, CHES, of Purdue University. “Because an email reminder is so simple, these findings should be easy to replicate, encouraging dog owners and non-dog owners alike to lead more physically active lifestyles.”

Participants assigned to the intervention group received a twice-weekly email message for the first four weeks of the intervention followed by weekly email messages for the next eight weeks. The emails attempted to influence confidence through a variety of mechanisms which the investigators hypothesized would directly influence dog walking for dog owners and walking for non-dog owners. Previous studies have supported that dog owners who walk their dogs are motivated to do so because of dog-related support for walking. A number of dog-owner participants in this study anecdotally reported that their ability to maintain behavior change in physical activity was in part due to the dog expecting a walk and conditioning the owner to comply.

“With more than 50 million dog-owning households in America, the scientifically-documented link between dog ownership and physical activity has the potential to positively impact public health on a broad scale,” said HABRI Executive Director Steven Feldman. “HABRI is committed to funding research that demonstrates the incredible power of the human-animal bond to improve our health and well-being.”

Research citation:


The HABRI Foundation maintains the world’s largest online library of human-animal bond research and information; funds innovative research projects to scientifically document the
health benefits of companion animals; and informs the public about human-animal bond research and the beneficial role of companion animals in society. For more information about the HABRI Foundation, please visit www.habri.org.

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