

## Research reveals that walking football can kick start fitness for over fifties

**Football enthusiasts can walk their way to better fitness, a new study from Southampton Solent University's sport scientists has shown.**

Just a couple of hours of walking football each week improved fitness and reduced body fat in the subjects, all men over 50, after just 12 weeks - and also increased the subjects' enthusiasm for ongoing physical activity.

Hampshire Football Association (HFA), the first county to bring the official set of rules for walking football to the Football Association (FA), approached Solent sport scientists to investigate the health benefits of the newly developed sport, which is aimed specifically at males over 50.

Matt York, Football Development Officer at Hampshire FA believes the involvement of Solent University's sport scientists could ensure the game is more widely recognised as a tool for engaging older men in a healthy lifestyle: "As a county we have seen the explosive growth of the sport, from one team to over 20 in the past year with 300 players participating weekly.

Walking Football holds a unique attraction for older men and will hopefully lead to distinctive health benefits for the participants. I look forward to working further with the University to try and attract backing for a larger research study from both the football industry and the health sector," he added.

The study aimed to assess whether walking football is able to provide sufficient physiological stimulus to increase, enhance and inspire positive health and training effects; specifically body shape, fitness and attitudes to towards physical activity. For the pilot study ten male participants completed a 12 -week walking football programme - consisting of a single two-hour training session (multiple 5-a-side games) each week.

A series of physiological and psychological tests were conducted before and after the programme duration. The study concluded that walking football improved all anthropometrical and fitness measures, as well as producing positive attitudes to physical activity, in particular walking football.

Professor Stewart Bruce-Low, research lead and Laboratory Director at Southampton Solent says: "With the potentially crippling over-use of the NHS, it is imperative that the UK population takes much greater ownership of their health and wellbeing to help relieve the stress placed on this service.

Our results from this initial pilot study suggest that walking football is a potentially effective public health intervention for this particular demographic of the population which we hope will be one of a number of approaches that in congruence could alleviate the stress on the currently over-stretched NHS."

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT THE MEDIA OFFICE ON 023 8201 3040 or [press.office@solent.ac.uk](mailto:press.office@solent.ac.uk)

### About Southampton Solent University

Southampton Solent University offers more than 19,000 students over 200 qualifications ranging from HND to PhD, in subjects such as maritime education and training, fashion and design, media and television, music, health, sport and leisure, business, IT and technology. The University was awarded the 2013 Quality Assurance kitemark for quality and standards of teaching and learning. Solent was voted one of the most creative universities in the UK in a Which? University 2014 poll of students. Solent Business School has been awarded the Small Business Charter Award, which is supported by

the Association of Business Schools and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and 'gold approval' by the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA).