University of Lethbridge News Release

For Immediate Release — Tuesday, October 2, 2018

Study finds two-thirds of Canadian children do not meet acceptable level of physical literacy

U of L research group one of 11 from across the country that participated in project

The results from a large national research project led by the Healthy Active Living and Obesity Research Group (HALO) at the CHEO Research Institute shows that about two-thirds of Canadian children haven't achieved an acceptable level of physical literacy.

Physical literacy is more than just fitness or motor skill; it includes the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life.

Fourteen articles that looked at different aspects of physical literacy and the Canadian Assessment of Physical Literacy (CAPL) were published today as a special supplement in the journal BMC Public Health. More than 10,000 children, aged 8 to 12, from 11 cities across the country participated in the study from 2014 to 2017 through the CHEO Research Institute and research partners. Using the CAPL, children were assessed on a number of different areas, such as step counts and questions about daily activities. The results of this research provide the first comprehensive assessment of the physical literacy of Canadian children.

The results demonstrate that more needs to be done to ensure Canadian children are physically literate.

"We hear about increasing obesity rates in kids, falling rates of physical activity and more time spent in front of screens," says Dr. Mark Tremblay, Senior Scientist at the CHEO Research Institute, Director of HALO and Professor of Pediatrics, Faculty of Medicine, University of Ottawa. "Physical literacy looks at different domains in children to give a better overall picture of children's healthy active living and future health. Physically literate children are more active and healthy children, which sets them up for life."

Dr. Jennifer Copeland, a researcher in the U of L's Department of Kinesiology & Physical Education, led a group of graduate and undergraduate students who collected data from more than 1,300 local children aged eight to 12 as part of the national study.

"We know how vitally important physical activity is to health and wellness, across the lifespan. It is important that we understand how to ensure children develop sufficient physical literacy, so that they can maintain and enjoy an active lifestyle as they grow up," says Copeland.

"Through this project, we provide comprehensive evidence that Canadian children aged 8 to 12 years are not meeting the standards for components of physical literacy," says Tremblay. "For example, boys and girls across Canada have aerobic fitness levels at the 30th percentile of global norms and only 20 per cent are meeting physical activity guidelines."

"These results show us that more needs to be done," says ParticipACTION President and CEO, Elio Antunes. "Every organization concerned with the well-being of children, whether provincial governments, municipal public health and recreation departments, boards of education and sports or recreation groups, should allocate additional resources to increase children's physical literacy. Additional education campaigns, greater priority in school curricula and increased numbers of physical education specialists could have a real impact in the health of Canada's children."

This research study was made possible in part with support from the RBC Learn to Play Project, an initiative funded by RBC and the Public Health Agency of Canada and delivered in partnership with ParticipACTION, with additional support from Mitacs.

-- 30 --

Contact:

Trevor Kenney, News & Information Manager
403-329-2710
403-360-7639 (cell)
trevor.kenney@uleth.ca

Dr. Jennifer Copeland, Department of Kinesiology & Physical Education
403-317-2804
jennifer.copeland@uleth.ca