Experiences of Pre-Heart Transplant CICU Patients Using Fitbit as an Ambulation Measuring Device
Frederick R. Macapagal, RN, BSN, CCRN
Holly M. Rodriguez, RN, BSN, CCRN
Emma Mcclellan, RN, MSN, CCRN; Nena Bonuel, RN, PhD, CCRN

Background/Introduction
- More than 500,000 people are diagnosed as having heart failure (HF) each year (Lloyd-Jones et al., 2010).
- While waiting for transplantation, HF patients are typically medically managed with Guideline Directed Medical Therapy (GDMT) and they are very prone to less than optimal mobility (Hashim 2015).
- Prolonged immobilization results in profound loss of muscle strength and endurance of every muscle in the body. Immobilized patients may lose up to 15% of their muscle strength each week and almost half of their normal strength in three to five weeks (Dittmer, & Teasell, 1993).
- Complete immobilization will significantly increase a patient’s morbidity and mortality (H’Doubler et al., 2000).
- Percutaneously placed axillary-subclavian intra-aortic balloon pump (IABP) support the patient’s heart while waiting for heart transplantation enabling them to ambulate.
- Initially a physical therapy (PT) wheel was utilized to measure the number of steps that the patient took during ambulation. The PT wheel was not accurate and it had limitations.
- An innovative approach using Fitbit as an ambulation measuring device was implemented.

Result
Happy
- The patients were happy, overjoyed when they received the Fitbit.

Motivated
- The patients were motivated/challenged to walk more.

Beneficial
- The patients stated that the Fitbit was beneficial to their ambulation regimen.

Future Potential
- The patients expressed the future potential of the Fitbit.

Result/Implications
Study participants claimed to have had experienced benefits from using the Fitbit as an ambulation measuring device. Participants were motivated to walk more and stay active. As a result of increased activity the patients claimed to have slept better at night. Additionally, they experienced an increase in stamina and even felt that the Fitbit would aid them with their post-operative recovery.

Future Action
A quantitative study of the Fitbit program will be next.

References

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