



World Transplant Games Federation

Powered by the gift of life

Media Release

United by the gift of life – now the challenge is to walk a billion steps!

September 18, 2017

The worldwide transplant community has been challenged to celebrate the gift of life and get active by collectively walking a billion steps.

The World Transplant Games Federation (WTGF) today announced its new initiative to encourage health and fitness amongst transplant recipients the world over.

The Fit for Life! Billion Steps Challenge, proudly supported by Astellas Pharma Inc. (collectively with its subsidiaries “Astellas”), is designed to help recipients take the first step in getting back to a life where physical activity and movement is normal.

WTGF President, Chris Thomas, said several research studies showed that some transplant recipients had a ‘fear of movement’ following transplantation, worried that they might overdo exercise and damage their transplanted organ.

“It is a very real concern for many people. However we can also demonstrate that, with planning, advice and common sense, transplant recipients can get back into exercise and sport. There really are no boundaries,” Mr Thomas said.

“While not possible for everyone, we know recipients that have climbed to the top of Mt Kilimanjaro, walked the Kokoda Track, run marathons and played professional football.

“But we don’t all have to be super stars. Our Billion Steps Challenge is designed to encourage recipients to take the first step and simply set goals to start walking regularly. After that, their future goals are up to them.”

Knowing the importance of an active community around recipients, the challenge is also open to the entire transplant community, including living donors, donor families, medical professionals, carers, family and friends.

It begins on September 18 and will run formally until December 17 or until one billion steps is reached.

It is designed as a fun, community-centred interactive challenge where teams of between three and 10 people register online and sync their fitness trackers to record their daily steps.



World Transplant Games Federation

Powered by the gift of life

The app, Stridekick: <https://stridekick.com/tc/wtgf>, also allows manual submission of steps for those who do not have a fitness tracker.

The app promotes healthy and fun competition between the teams, with various newsfeed and chat forums active, as well as regular messages of encouragement and updates on the leader board status.

There is no age limit and no experience is needed. The challenge is designed to motivate all to exercise within their means, starting with some simple goals, such as walking around the block and building towards more ambitious goals.

The Billion Step Challenge is being led by many of the WTGF Fit for Life! Ambassadors. The WTGF has more than 20 transplant recipient ambassadors across the globe. Here's what a few of them have had to say about the challenge:

SURETHA MAARTENS, SOUTH AFRICA:

Quote: This program is a definite 'step' in the right direction! Anyone can do it! It is an amazing way to break the barrier between transplant recipients and the 'normal' population, creating unity, as a team! Working together for one goal, awareness of activity!

JENNIFER DICKER, AUSTRALIA:

Quote: I'm excited about the 90-day challenge because it will motivate me to be more conscious of my step count and I'm sure it will get me moving more. Working as a team will be fun as we encourage each other to get moving.

HERMANN STEYN, SOUTH AFRICA:

Quote: "I've always enjoyed taking walks for all the benefits associated with it – healthy lifestyle, getting fit and all the other nice things, but apart from making time to train for my athletic events, often I never have the time to just walk. Focusing on the "Billion Steps Challenge" will make me accountable to making my daily walks a priority and motivating others to also get active and live full and active lives"

LUIS FRANCISCO SANZ DIAZ, SPAIN:

Quote: "Physical activity and sports are the only treatments that have only positive side effects. Let's walk 1 billion steps together to show the benefits of it and help improving the quality of life of sedentary people"



World Transplant Games Federation

Powered by the gift of life

LARA BEEKMAN, SWITZERLAND:

Quote: "I love the Billion Steps Challenge because it is a global opportunity for people with an organ transplant to set an example and inspire the young and old to get more active and look after their health by keeping fit."

ALEXANDRE HUMEAU, FRANCE:

Quote: The Billion Step challenge is a great opportunity to engage many people. Sport and fitness concerns everyone, not only transplant people. This challenge will make people more aware of the importance of an active lifestyle.

To find out more about the Billion Steps Challenge or sign up to, please visit <http://wtgf.org/what-is-the-billion-steps-challenge/>



Proudly supported by  **astellas**

Contacts:

Kim Renyard – Executive Manager
World Transplant Games Federation
Email: kim.renyard@wtgf.org

About the World Transplant Games Federation

The World Transplant Games Federation unites transplant recipients from across the world to promote the success of organ and tissue donation and life-saving transplantation. With more than 70 member countries, the WTGF stages the world's largest awareness event for transplantation, the Summer World Games, to inspire the public to consider organ and tissue donation. The WTGF also inspires recipients to rehabilitate following their transplant and keep fit and healthy in their ongoing life journey.