Despite a growing number of studies suggesting a health risk associated with prolonged sitting, many occupations, particularly in the office environment continue to be highly sedentary with little opportunity for standing breaks or movement.

Between August and November 2015, Sydney Trains introduced a Sit Less & Move More program within their metropolitan offices. The program, a co-design between Sydney Trains and the University of Sydney’s Prevention Research Collaboration (PRC), was delivered and evaluated by the PRC. It involved a number of strategies to reduce prolonged sedentary behaviour in their office-based workers including:

- Sit-stand desks;
- Sit-less prompting apps;
- Educational workshops; and
- Informative and reminder emails.

Employees who took part showed a reduction in their sitting time at work and a doubling in their standing time. The program was generally well-received and the provision of sit-stand desks with supporting resources and education was considered acceptable and beneficial by the participants.

Program Aim
The aim of the program was to find out how effective, acceptable and feasible it was to run a multi-component workplace intervention with the intent to reduce sedentary behaviour and interrupt prolonged sitting in office-based workers.

What was done?
Employees of Sydney Trains were divided into two groups: control and intervention. The control group received no education or changes in the workplace environment, but the intervention group was provided with five main components:

1. Sit-stand desk: A height adjustable desktop add-on which allows users to interchange between sitting and standing positions.
2. Prompting app: A free-to-download app (Vari-Desk Standing Companion App), which users can set-up on their desktop, smartphone or tablet to prompt them to stand-up or sit-down at customisable times.
3. Workshop: A one-hour education workshop detailing the risks of prolonged sitting and benefits of

Prolonged sitting time and non-exercise activity (i.e. movement that is not structured exercise such as shopping, cooking and other small movements) have been linked to cardiovascular disease, obesity, type 2 diabetes, and metabolic syndrome (Bauman AE, Chau JY, Ding D, Bennie J., 2013).
breaking up sitting time. This that was followed by facilitated group discussions on how sitting less and moving more could be promoted and realistically implemented in the workplace.

4. Informative emails: A series of weekly emails that included tips, guidelines and reminders to sit less and move more throughout the workday.

5. Site visits: Three site visits were conducted by the research team and involved visual assessments of sit-stand desk setups as well as advice where required.

The program was run over a 15-week period beginning with a baseline period of five working days in which all participants were monitored before the program. Following the baseline measurement, the Sit Less & Move More program components were delivered to participants in the intervention group. The control group received no change in their work practices or environment. Both the control and intervention groups were measured at two time points after the program started (Follow-up 1 and Follow-up 2). Refer to figure 1.

What did the Sydney Trains program achieve?

Participants in the Sydney Trains Sit Less & Move More program enjoyed its various elements and the ability to choose when to sit or stand. They found the program to be a useful reminder to sit less and stand more to achieve potential health benefits. In particular, participants in the intervention group:

- showed a reduction in the proportion of their work day spent sitting (from 79% to 64%)
- and a doubling in their standing time at work; (13% to 27%)
- reported feeling more alert, inspired and active when standing, compared to when they were sitting.

Participants also enquired about utilising the building’s fire stairs to move between floors for work.

Overall, the program was well received by participants and they thought that it was beneficial and would recommend it to their colleagues.

Sustainable outcomes and future directions

The co-design of this pilot study was unique, and provides insights into how workplace Sit Less, Move More programs can be tailored to suit the needs of individual workplaces.

While the results of this study are very promising, the long term impact will need to be evaluated i.e. whether the participants will still choose to stand up more and sit down less after the study and what effects this may have on their work-related perceptions and any musculoskeletal issues.

Recommendations to improve the roll-out of future program elements within Sydney Trains include:

- Maintain an ongoing program to promote sit-stand behaviour and awareness;
- Continue to prioritise workplace health and its benefits across the organisation in order to instigate workplace cultural change.
- Identify and promote a divisional workplace champion who is invested in and interested in the program.

References: