

Akademi to present at Aesop Arts & Health Showcase

27 March 2018 – For immediate release

Akademi will showcase its pioneering work to improve the health and wellbeing of older adults through South Asian dance at a major forthcoming conference.

Akademi's Dance Well project, funded by the **Big Lottery**, has provided dance and movement workshops influenced by South Asian dance for older adults since January 2016. The project aims to improve the health and wellbeing of isolated older adults who are not currently engaging in the recommended levels of physical activity. To date, Dance Well has reached over 600 older adults in community organisations, care homes, dementia day centres and hospitals.

Akademi is one of 24 organisations showcasing their work at the second **Aesop Arts in Health Conference and Showcase** on 19 April at Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London. This presentation will focus on Akademi's work with cardiac and pulmonary rehabilitation patients at Harefield Hospital including a new study to establish if a South Asian dance intervention results in an improvement to aspects of physical fitness and psychological wellness.

Dance Well is building evidence for South Asian dance as a viable tool to improve the health and wellbeing of older adults. The workshops with cardiac and pulmonary rehabilitation patients at Harefield Hospital in collaboration with rb&hArts have been led by Kathak dance artist, Rachel Waterman, and been extremely well received, with participants stating that it has improved their breathing, mental health and social interaction in the community.

"I come out of the sessions feeling more flexible, my energy is boosted and it is hugely uplifting mentally"- Dance Well participant

Current data goes some way to establishing the positive impact of dance on the physical, social and emotional health of participants. Akademi now aims to further develop this evidence base through a structured dance intervention at Harefield Hospital, alongside measurements of physical fitness and psychological wellness.

Dance Well provides an ongoing, enjoyable form of exercise once patients have completed cardiac and pulmonary rehabilitation and provides exercises to carry out at home in addition to the classes. Cardiovascular disease cost the healthcare system around £8.6 billion in 2009 with informal care costing around £3.8 billion¹. With an average 76% of patients who are referred to cardiac rehabilitation considered inactive², offering a continued programme of enjoyable post-rehabilitation physical activity should offer a cost-effective option to maintain levels of physical activity in these patients, as well as reducing incidents of loneliness.

Christina Christou, Akademi's Consultant Education Director said: *"Dance Well's artists have been carefully distilling the essence of South Asian dance practices and creating hugely impactful moments, working especially through the breath and with attendance to the smallest beautifully-created mudra (symbolic hand-gesture) right across to mood-elevating and stirring movement sequences.*

This work has been enriching the treatments and recovery of patients and we propose that creativity and the spirit of South Asian dance is a heartening exponent in supporting adults to recapture strength and sustain wellbeing."

Tickets are available to book directly on <https://goo.gl/hNKFYr>

1. (2013) Economic costs of physical activity, British Heart Foundation National Centre
2. (2017) Physical Inactivity and Sedentary Behaviour Report 2017,

Further information:

<http://akademi.co.uk>

<https://twitter.com/akademi>

<https://www.facebook.com/Akademi.southasian.dance>

<https://www.ae-sop.org/connect/second-arts-in-health-conference-and-showcase/>

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Press images:

Attached

NOTES TO EDITORS

Akademi

Founded in 1979, **Akademi** is the UK's leading producer of South Asian dance, capturing imaginations through inspiring storytelling and unique spectacle. Creating vital talent pathways for the next generation of dance artists, Akademi also takes dance to the heart of the community, offering life-affirming experiences for those who are disadvantaged, disengaged or isolated.

rb&hArts, the Trust's arts programme, is delivered through Royal Brompton & Harefield Hospitals Charity. It is charitably funded to bring the benefits of the arts to support in and outpatients. It aims to increase levels of wellbeing, enhance the patient experience and improve the healthcare estate through the arts. It first began in 2002 and now, in a typical year, they run 250 workshops with over 5,000 people taking part. This includes Singing for Breathing which supports people living with respiratory diseases, live music for adult inpatients, a participatory music and beatboxing project for hospitalised young people along with arts and craft workshops for in and out patients.

Royal Brompton & Harefield NHS Foundation Trust is the UK's largest specialist centre for the treatment of heart and lung disease. Working from two sites, Royal Brompton Hospital in Chelsea, West London, and Harefield Hospital, near Uxbridge, the Trust has an international reputation for the expertise of its staff, high standard of care and research success. Experts at the Trust help patients from all age groups who have heart and lung problems and provide some of the most complex surgery and sophisticated treatments available anywhere in the world.

For further information, visit www.rbht.nhs.uk