

Level of Physical Activity and Physical Fitness, and Attitudes towards Physical Activity among Senior Medical Students of Sultan Qaboos University, Sultanate of Oman

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Abstract : Background: The available evidence in Oman on lack of physical activity call for immediate intervention. Physical activity counseling by doctors to their patients is influenced by their attitudes and personal physical fitness. To our best knowledge, the physical activity status of Omani medical students has not been addressed before. These future doctors will have a critical role in improving physical activity in patients and thus their overall health. Objective: The aim of the study is to assess the physical activity level, physical fitness level, and attitudes towards physical activity among Sultan Qaboos University senior medical students. Methods: In this cross-sectional study (N=110; males 55), physical activity level was assessed using International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ) short form and attitudes towards physical activity using a fifty-four-items Kenyon questionnaire. The physical fitness level was assessed by estimating maximal oxygen uptake (VO_{2max}) using Chester step test. Results: Female students reported more sitting time more than 7hr/day (85.5%) compared to male students (40%; $p < 0.05$). The IPAQ revealed moderate level of physical activity in 58% of students. Students showed a high positive attitude towards physical activity for health and fitness and low attitude for physical activity as tension and risk. Both female and male students had a similar level and attitude towards physical activity. Physical fitness level was excellent ($VO_{2max} > 55ml O_2/kg/min$) in 11% of students, good ($VO_{2max} > 44-54ml O_2/kg/min$) in 49% and average to below-average in 40%. Objectively measured physical fitness level, subjectively reported physical activity level or attitudes towards physical activity were not correlated. Conclusion: Omani medical students have a positive attitude towards physical activity but moderate physical activity level. Longer sitting time in females need further evaluation. Efforts are required to understand reasons for present physical activity level and to promote good physical activity among medical students by creating more awareness and facilities.

Keywords : Chester step test, Kenyon scale, medical students, physical activity, physical fitness

Conference Title : ICPMIM 2019 : International Conference on Preventive Medicine and Integrative Medicine

Conference Location : Athens, Greece

Conference Dates : October 21-22, 2019