

The Global Children's Challenge Program: Pedometer Step Count in an Australian School

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Abstract : The importance and significance of this research is based upon the fundamental knowledge reported in the scientific literature that physical activity is inversely associated with obesity. In addition, it is recognized there is a global epidemic of sedentariness while at the same time it is known that morbidity and mortality are associated with physical inactivity and as a result of overweight or obesity. Hence this small study in school students is an important area of research in our community. An application submitted in 2005 for the inaugural Public Health Education Research Trust [PHERT] Post Graduate Research Scholarship scheme organized by the Public Health Association of Australia [PHAA] was awarded 3rd place within Australia. The author and title was: D. Hilton, Methods to increase physical activity in school aged children [literature review, a trial using pedometers and a policy paper]. Third place is a good result, however this did not secure funding for the project, as only first place received \$5000 funding. Some years later within Australia, a program commenced called the Global Children's Challenge [GCC]. Given details of the 2005 award above were included an application submission prepared for Parkhill Primary School [PPS] which is located in Victoria, Australia was successful. As a result, an excited combined grade 3/4 class at the school [27 students] in 2012 became recipients of these free pedometers. Ambassadors for the program were Mrs Catherine Freeman [OAM], Olympic Gold Medalist & Sydney 2000 [400 meters], while another ambassador was Mr Colin Jackson [CBE] who is a Welsh former sprint and hurdling athlete. In terms of PPS and other schools involved in 2012, website details show that the event started on 19th Sep 2012 and students were to wear the pedometer every day for 50 days [at home and at school] aiming for the recommended 15,000 steps/day recording steps taken in a booklet provided. After the finish, an analysis of the average step count for this school showed that the average steps taken / day was 14, 003 [however only a small percentage of students returned the booklets and units] as unfortunately the dates for the program coincided with school holidays so some students either forgot or misplaced the units / booklets. Unfortunately funding for this program ceased in 2013, however the lasting impact of the trial on student's knowledge and awareness remains and in fact becomes a good grounding for students in how to monitor basic daily physical activity using a method that is easy, fun, low cost and readily accessible.

Keywords : walking, physical activity, exercise, Australian school

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