

Assessment of Physical Activity Levels in Qatar: A Pedometer-Based Study

Authors : Souzan Al Sayegh, Izzeldin Ibrahim, Mercia Van Der Walt, Mohamed Al-Kuwari

Abstract : Background: Walking is the most common form of physical activity which can promote a healthy well-being among people of different age groups. In this regard, pedometers are becoming more popular within research and are considered useful tools in monitoring physical activity levels based on individuals' daily steps. A value of '5,000 steps/day is identified as a sedentary lifestyle index where individuals are physically inactive. Those achieving 5,000-7,499 steps/day have a low active lifestyle as they do not meet the moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA) recommendations. Moreover, individuals achieving $\geq 7,500$ steps/day are classified as physically active. The objective of this study is to assess the physical activity levels of adult population in Qatar through a pedometer-based program over a one-year period. Methods: A cross-sectional analysis, as part of a longitudinal study, was carried out over one year to assess the daily step count. 'Step into Health' is a community-based program launched by Aspire as an approach for the purpose of improving physical activity across the population of Qatar. The program involves the distribution of pedometers to registered members which is supported by a self-monitoring online account and linked to a web database. Daily habitual physical activity (daily total step count) was assessed through Omron HJ-324U pedometer. Analyses were done on data extracted from the web database. Results: A total of 1,988 members were included in this study (males: $n=1,143$, 57%; females: $n=845$, 43%). Average age was 37.8 ± 10.9 years distributed as 60% of age between age 25-54 ($n=1,186$), 27% of age 45-64 ($n=546$), and 13% of age 18-24 years ($n=256$). Majority were non-Qataris, 81% ($n=1,609$) compared with 19% of the Qatari nationality ($n=379$). Average body mass index (BMI) was 27.8 ± 6.1 (kg/m²) where most of them (41%, $n=809$) were found to be overweight, between 25-30 kg/m². Total average step count was $5,469 \pm 3,884$. Majority were found to be sedentary ($n=1110$, 55.8%). Middle aged individuals were more active than the other two age groups. Males were seen as more active than females. Those who were less active had a higher BMI. Older individuals were more active. There was a variation in the physical activity level throughout the year period. Conclusion: It is essential to further develop the available intervention programs and increase their physical activity behavior. Planning such physical activity interventions for female population should involve aspects such as time, environmental variables and aerobic steps.

Keywords : adults, pedometer, physical activity, step-count

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