

Pedometer use in the context of the 10,000 Steps Rockhampton project: Results from a population survey

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Although pedometers are becoming popular as both measurement and motivational tools in physical activity promotion, little is known about use of pedometers in a population context. A population-based CATI survey was used to explore issues relating to pedometer use and utility in the context of the 10,000 Steps Rockhampton project (N=1227) and in a non-intervention comparison community (Mackay, N=1232). The results showed that the majority of respondents knew what a pedometer was (Rockhampton 79%, Mackay 59.5%). Not surprisingly, pedometer use was much higher in Rockhampton (22.1% of respondents reported that they had used a pedometer in the last 18 months) than in Mackay (5.9%). In Rockhampton, the odds of using a pedometer were higher in women (OR 1.27 CI: 0.94-1.69) and in people aged 35-44 (OR 1.47 CI: 0.98-2.21) (compared with men, and people in younger age groups). There were no differences in pedometer use across BMI categories. In both Rockhampton and Mackay, those in the highest category of household income were more than twice as likely to have used a pedometer than those in the lowest income category. Also in both locations, respondents who were not meeting the current physical activity guidelines were about half as likely to report having used a pedometer as those meeting the guidelines (Mackay OR 0.45, CI:0.28-0.75); Rockhampton OR 0.62, CI:0.46-0.83). In the context of the 10,000 Steps Rockhampton intervention, pedometer awareness was high, and the majority of pedometer users felt that they were useful in helping with physical activity levels. The authors acknowledge the support of Queensland Health in the completion of this project.

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Personal and environmental influences of unhealthy weight gain in a regional community.

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Evidence is accumulating demonstrating how the environments in which we live influence our choices to engage in physically active lifestyles, however, little research exists identifying the link between unhealthy weight gain and local urban environments. This study examines the association between self-report and GIS-derived measures of the local neighbourhood and the likelihood of being overweight or obese. Self-report measures of activity level, television viewing and the environment were acquired by telephone survey (N = 1281) of the Rockhampton population. Activity level was determined using the Active Australia questionnaire; self-report measures of the environment were derived from social-ecological models and administered within the CATI survey performed in October 2001. Euclidian and street network distances were determined using GIS from the CATI respondent's homes to the most proximate busy street, newsagents, stores and public open spaces. Results from logistic regression revealed that when adjusting for age, gender, education level and activity level perceiving the neighbourhood to be safe to walk in was positively associated (OR 1.66, 95% CI 1.05-2.62) with the likelihood of being overweight. When adjusting for the identified variables, people who reported seeing people walking in the neighbourhood (OR 0.50, 95% CI 0.27-0.93), and perceived the footpaths to be in good condition (OR 0.68, 95% CI 0.47-0.99) were less likely to be obese. People agreeing that there were busy streets to cross when walking were more likely to be obese (OR 1.54, 95% CI 1.03-2.29) than those who did not agree with this statement. These findings suggest that various characteristics of the environment influence unhealthy weight gain, some of which can be modified. The authors acknowledge the support of Queensland Health in the completion of this project.