

National fitness database should help Americans battle cardiovascular disease

April 21 2015, by Marc Ransford

Ball State University is collecting health-related data to create a national fitness database as part of the nation's fight against cardiovascular disease, the No. 1 killer of Americans.

Housed within Ball State's School of Physical Education, Sport, and Exercise Science with assistance from the University of Illinois-Chicago, the Fitness Registry and the Importance of Exercise: A National Database (FRIEND) is the first of its kind. It will provide a representative sample of the nation's population that can be used to accurately interpret [cardiorespiratory fitness](#).

Project co-chair Lenny Kaminsky said that improved population health is the ultimate goal of data collection, allowing for tracking of changes in functional abilities of individuals from diverse races and ethnicities and throughout the lifespan.

Kaminsky, coordinator of the clinical exercise physiology program and director of Ball State's Fisher Institute for Wellness and Gerontology, was the lead author on a 2013 American Heart Association policy statement that called the creation of such a database. The registry has been collecting data from various medical and research facilities for the last several months. Its first report is due by the end of the year.

The AHA estimates direct and indirect costs of [cardiovascular disease](#) in the U.S. exceeded \$320 billion in 2008 and projected total costs could increase to \$1.2 trillion by 2030.

"Increasing attention is being given to the importance of physical activity and physical [fitness](#) for decreasing chronic diseases, promoting overall cardiovascular and general health, improving quality of life and delaying cardiovascular disease and mortality in the U.S. population," Kaminsky said. "Clearly, [physical fitness](#) and aerobic fitness levels, in particular, are an underpinning for academic achievement, job productivity and overall maintenance of cardiovascular and [general health](#), among other things."

Aerobic fitness also helps address other health issues, including depression and dementia, as well as mortality rates from various cancers, especially of the breast and colon/digestive tract.

Kaminsky points out that the database will support the AHA in meeting recently developed goals of achieving ideal cardiovascular health, which is influenced greatly by key lifestyle factors of being physically active, maintaining appropriate dietary habits and not smoking.

Provided by Ball State University

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