

Wearable fitness monitors don't motivate exercise, says study

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The results of a new study on physical activity have researchers asking what in the world will it take to get people moving.

Clarkson University Associate Professor of Physical Therapy & Physician Assistant Studies Ali Boolani and Oklahoma State University Associate Professor of Physical Education Timothy Baghurst wanted to see how aspiring physical educators might change their physical activity levels when they know they're being monitored.

For this Oklahoma State University-based study, they got together a group of 36 physical education [students](#) and gave each one a monitor, telling them it would measure the amount of sunlight they received each day. Later, they gave them another monitor to count the number of steps they took each day.

The catch is both monitors actually measured how active the fitness advocates were. It turns out, the students failed to put their best foot forward. While Boolani and his fellow researchers expected the students to set a brisk pace as roles models for good health, they weren't much more active than average, not-so-active citizens, even though they knew their steps were being counted.

"You need to take 10,000 steps a day to equal 30 minutes of light-to-moderate [physical activity](#) a day, and you should really do an hour a day to be healthy," Boolani notes. "Students in the study took 11,000 or 12,000 steps a day, which isn't much above the minimum, and their

activity didn't change with the monitoring. We expected them to model good fitness, but now we wonder what we can do to get people to be more physically active!"

"This is a fascinating study and its implications are high for health care professionals. They should be modeling good health," he says, adding, "This shows you, don't rely on an exercise monitor as your motivation."

Boolani's teaching expertise includes exercise physiology. This study is part of a series he and his colleagues are pursuing to determine ways to encourage people be more physically active, or healthier. Next up, they will be exploring activity levels among different professions and majors, in multiple sites.

"There's definitely more to come from this research," he notes.

The manuscript on the study has been accepted for publication in the *PHEnex Journal*.

Provided by Clarkson University

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