

Tackling the global challenge of physical inactivity takes all disciplines

December 18 2019



What is clear, according to Professor Nick Draper, is that awareness of the health risks of physical inactivity (lack of physical activity) is growing. Credit: Bruno Nascimento on Unsplash

Do not underestimate the dangers of physical inactivity, warns

University of Canterbury (UC) sports expert Professor Nick Draper, who has edited a new book to examine the causes of, and solutions to, physical inactivity.

Based at UC's College of Education, Health and Human Development, Professor Draper brings experience as a physical education teacher, Olympic judo coach, Chair of Sport and Exercise Science New Zealand, and founding member of the International Rock Climbing Research Association to his role, which includes Programme Director for UC's Master of Sport Science program.

The book, "[Physical Activity: A Multi-disciplinary Introduction](#)," brings together leading researchers of biochemistry, [public health](#), biomechanics, physiology, sport psychology and sociology to tackle issues such as behavior change, motor-skill development, nutrition and green exercise prescriptions.

"The simple answer is: there is no simple answer," Professor Draper says. "Physical activity is different for children, for adults, for older adults, for people who are obese, so the solutions have to be specific and people must enjoy the activity. We need innovative approaches to promotion and intervention tailored to every age range and environment."

What is clear, he says, is that awareness of the health risks of [physical inactivity](#) (lack of physical activity) is growing.

"*The Lancet* in 2012 published a series of watershed papers highlighting the risk factors for mortality associated physical inactivity. In response to results from a large cohort study in the United States, Steven Blair's team coined the term 'smokadiabesity,' after finding that physical inactivity was more of a risk to health than smoking, diabetes and obesity combined. There is more and more research about, and

awareness of, the benefits of activity for physical and mental health," Professor Draper says.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), physical inactivity is now identified as the fourth leading risk factor for global mortality. It is on the rise in many countries, with major implications for general [health](#) worldwide. Guidelines are for 30 minutes of activity five times a week for adults—this is the requirement.

"The challenge for researchers and those working in the sector is to understand each other's disciplines and areas of expertise so we can create really effective multi-disciplinary solutions."

While working in the United Kingdom on a project, Professor Draper says one of the most effective strategies was to get different floors of the local council talking to each other.

"Answers at the government and policy level must cross boundaries—there is no council solution for increasing activity without adequate roading, [cycleways and footpaths] for example."

While the emphasis is on physical activity, mindset is a major component. As a PE teacher, Professor Draper was interested in the kids who didn't like sport and what [physical activity](#) could look like for them. Coaching the British judo team to the Sydney Olympics, he learned that beyond training and natural ability, psychology is paramount to performance.

In another study Professor Draper led, mindset explained the difference between the performance of beginner and advanced rock climbers, where there were no discernible differences in physiological or psychological indicators. The beginners worried about the height they were at, while the expert climbers simply focused on their next move.

Such studies have relevance for the general population, he says. "Body and mind, you can't separate them."

More information: Physical Activity: A Multi-disciplinary Introduction. [www.routledge.com/Physical-Act ...
p/book/9781138696624](http://www.routledge.com/Physical-Act...p/book/9781138696624)

Provided by University of Canterbury

Citation: Tackling the global challenge of physical inactivity takes all disciplines (2019, December 18) retrieved 28 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-12-tackling-global-physical-inactivity-disciplines.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.