

A PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN CAMP ENVIRONMENTS



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ABSTRACT

Although camps are believed to embody physical activity (PA), little empirical data has been collected to support this notion. The purpose of this study was to collect objective PA measurements of children and campers using pedometers at organized summer residential and day camps.

INTRODUCTION

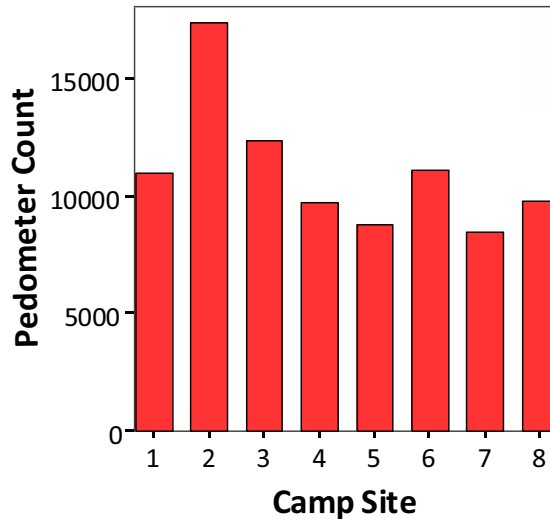
The importance of PA in the lives of children has become increasingly evident in society and research communities. Regular bouts of PA participation have been associated with positive social, mental, and physical well-being as well as deterring poor health conditions across the lifespan. Infrequent participation in PA has been linked with greater prevalence of obesity and related diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and cancer.

METHODS

- Data were collected from June – August 2007 at camps in central and eastern NC.
- n = 8 (4 day, 4 residential camps)
- n = 291 (campers); 45 (counselors)
- Campers age 9 - 12 and counselors wore Yamax Digiwalker SW-200 pedometers during their waking hours at camp.
- Additional data were collected about camper demographics and the camp environment.

RESULTS / DISCUSSION

Steps x Camp



CHILDREN
AVERAGE
OVER 11,000
STEPS PER DAY
AT CAMP

Camps 1 – 4 (residential camps); Camps 5 – 8 (day camps)

Steps x Type of Camp

Type	n	Mean	SD
Day	181	9537.12	2712.91
Residential	154	12932.25	4528.96

- Males averaged approximately 2219 more steps per day than females ($p = .000$).
- Age was not significantly related to steps per day.
- Campers/counselors did not significantly differ in steps.
- Campers at more decentralized camps took significantly more steps ($p < .000$).

RESEARCH IN ACTION

Since little research has been conducted concerning PA in camps, more evaluations need to be conducted. A commonly stated goal is 10,000 steps per day, but as more is understood about PA this may be an underestimate. This study indicated that camps are not providing more PA than typical (school, neighborhood) daily settings (Flohr, Todd, & Tudor-Locke, 2006). To improve upon camp PA participation, directors can intentionally plan for PA opportunities in each camp day, select activities which elicit more vigorous movements, and spread out travel routes to activities for more walking.

