

**Are physiotherapists walking the walk? : a global survey of physiotherapists' physical activity levels**

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# Are Physiotherapists Walking the Walk?

## A Global Survey of Physiotherapists' Physical Activity Levels



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### Introduction

Physical inactivity is a leading risk factor for morbidity and mortality worldwide. Physical activity (PA) counselling by healthcare professionals has been shown to be effective in increasing PA levels and increasing years lived free from disease.<sup>1</sup>

There is compelling evidence that the PA habits of healthcare professionals influence the amount that they promote PA in clinical practice.<sup>2</sup>

Exploring Physiotherapists' own PA habits will help us to understand this important factor that influences PA promotion in clinical practice.

The aim of the study was to record the PA levels of a global sample of Physiotherapists.

### Participants

Data was collected opportunistically from participants of a global, online physiotherapy and physical activity course #PEPA MOOC.<sup>3</sup>

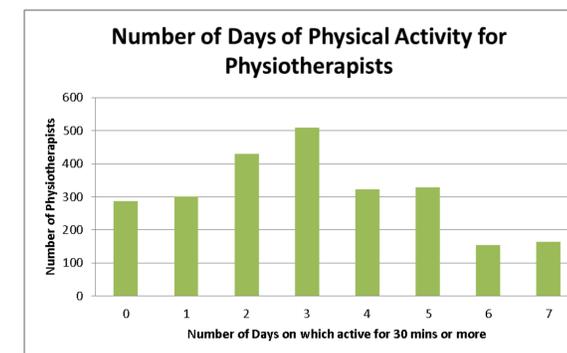
### Methods

A validated, single-item question was used to assess the number of days on which respondents had been active for at least 30 minutes in the last week.

### Results

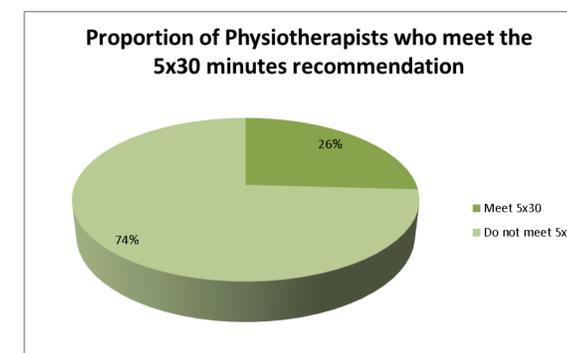
There were 2498 responses from 120 countries. The mean number of days on which respondents had been sufficiently active in the previous week was 3.

Figure 1. Number of days on which Physiotherapists achieved at least 30 minutes of PA.



The proportion of respondents who had been active on 5 or more days was 26% (n=647). Of all responses, 74% (n=1851) had been active on 4 or fewer days and had therefore not achieved the 5x 30 minutes of moderate PA per week recommendation.

Figure 2. Proportion of Physiotherapists who met the recommendation for 5x 30 minutes of moderate PA per week.



Over 11% (n=287) of respondents reported that they did not achieve 30 minutes moderate PA on any day in the previous week.

### Discussion & Conclusions

There are limitations to using a single-item, self-report tool. These preliminary findings suggest that the PA habits of Physiotherapists around the globe may be surprisingly low and that many Physiotherapists may not meet PA guidelines.

### Implications

This may be an important issue to explore further in order to increase PA promotion in clinical practice. There may also be important implications for the health and wellbeing of the physiotherapy workforce.

### References

- 1) GAPA and ISPAH. The Toronto Charter for Physical Activity: A Global Call to Action 2010.
- 2) Lobelo, F & Garcia de Quevedo, I. The Evidence in Support of Physicians and Health Care Providers as Physical Activity Role Models. 2014, Am J Lifestyle Med.
- 3) PEPA MOOC Evaluation Report 2017.
- 4) Milton, K, Clemes, S & Bull, F. Can a single question provide an accurate measure of physical activity? 2013 BJSM.

### Acknowledgements

Ethical Approval was granted by Sheffield Hallam University Faculty of Health & Wellbeing Ethics Board.

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**PEPA MOOC**  
Physiotherapy, Exercise and Physical Activity  
Massive Open Online Course

This course was designed to help healthcare professionals understand the size of the problem of physical inactivity in populations globally, the role of physical inactivity in the causation of a number of conditions and the benefits of exercise in treatment and prevention, and to encourage those who access the course to perform and evaluate interventions to increase physical activity in their settings.

The PEPA MOOC was developed and delivered as a collaboration between Physiopedia and Exercise Works.

#### PARTICIPANTS

**8482** participants registered

**157** countries represented

Its hard choosing the best part of this course. The course materials were so spot on and revealing for me. As a physical therapist clinician, there were a lot of things I even took for granted but this course has brought that to my attention.

- Total number of discussion posts **10799**
- Number of learning activities logged **58,682**

#### PROFESSIONS

85.56% were physiotherapists

7258 Physiotherapy / Physical Therapy	552 Other	278 Fitness Industry
209 Medical Doctor	114 Occupational Therapy	71 Nurse

Role - 59.06% were clinicians and 19.37% were students

Other-374 Researcher-269 Assistant-361  
**Clinician-5010**  
 Educator-603 Student-1643  
 Manager-222

"In the past week, on how many days have you done a total of 30 min or more of physical activity, which was enough to raise your breathing rate? This may include sport, exercise and brisk walking or cycling for recreation or to get to and from places, but should not include housework or physical activity that may be part of your job?"<sup>4</sup>