

19. SWACSM Abstract

The Effects of a Fitness and Wellness Course on Physical Activity Behavior and Intentions: Comparing In-Person Learning to Remote Learning.

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ABSTRACT

College students are often at-risk for physical inactivity. Many higher education institutions do not require physical activity courses, thus limiting the opportunity to promote physical activity. Of particular interest is the relationship between physical activity, mental health, and perceived barriers (e.g., access to resources, school-related responsibilities). Decreasing physical inactivity in college students by embedding a mandatory fitness and wellness course into the curriculum could be a viable option. **PURPOSE:** The purpose of this study was to distinguish if a fitness and wellness course delivered through an in-person or remote modality would affect students' physical activity behavior and intention throughout a semester. **METHODS:** To retrieve information on physical activity behavior, sedentary behavior, and physical activity intention at three time points in the semester, the International Physical Activity Questionnaire was utilized, as was a questionnaire assessing physical activity intentions. **RESULTS:** The in-person group (n = 25) engaged in significantly more walking than the remote group (n=17; p=.04); no significant differences were found between groups for other physical activity behaviors. There was no difference between groups in physical activity behavior even though the remote group had greater intentions of being physically active (p = .02). Findings from the physical activity intentions questionnaire highlighted that the remote group scored higher in the instrumental and injunctive (p = .001) domains. There was also a significant reduction in perceived opportunity to engage in physical activity by both groups (p = .04), despite reporting greater access to resources, as the semester progressed (p = .05). Personal testimonies disclosed that low levels of physical activity were associated with increased stress due to school, lack of time, and lack of motivation. **CONCLUSION:** The comparison between in-person and online modalities, and their influence on physical activity and behavior is limited in the literature. Studies should further explore if incorporating a fitness and wellness course in higher education would benefit students' physical activity intentions, behaviors, awareness of physical activity resources, and overall well-being.