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Do College Students View Walking as Physical Activity? Relationship between Walking and Physical Activity Perceptions

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Adults are recommended to complete 150-300 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical activity (PA) for substantial health benefits; however, 1 in 4 adults do not fulfill the PA recommendations globally. Walking is the most common mode of PA participation; however, it is unclear if college students view this mode of movement as physical activity. Brisk walking as a form of PA may help college students to overcome common barriers to PA participation. Common perceived barriers include lack of time, interference with work or school, motivation, and tiredness. **PURPOSE:** To examine the association between self-reported walking (indoor or outdoor for transportation or exercise) and perceptions of PA in a sample of college students. **METHODS:** College students completed a one-time online questionnaire regarding demographics, total walking per week, and perceptions of PA (barriers, benefits, and views). Students were eligible to participate if they were 18-24 years old and registered for classes. **RESULTS:** Seventy-eight participants provided informed consent and completed the questionnaire. Participants were 18-24 years old, female (79.7%), and reported engaging in an average of 332 ± 233 minutes per week of brisk walking, the most common form of PA. While the mean self-reported brisk walking exceeded the minimum PA recommendations, 16.67% of the sample did not report engaging in a minimum of 150 of moderate intensity activity each week. The relationship between self-reported walking and perceptions of PA were examined. Participation in brisk walking was associated with the following perceptions: I consider myself physically active ($r = -0.267$, $p = 0.018$), PA is uncomfortable ($r = 0.227$, $p = 0.045$), and I do enough PA to keep me healthy ($r = -0.245$, $p = 0.030$). **CONCLUSIONS:** While most participants in this study reported high levels of brisk walking each week; self-reported walking was negatively associated with perceptions of being a physically active individual and engaging in enough PA to be healthy. These results highlight a need to disseminate additional information on PA recommendations among individuals in this age group and identify strategies for addressing perceptions of walking as a form of PA.