

## **IMPROVED HEALTH BENEFITS THROUGH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR SPORTING CLUB MEMBERS**

**Overview of Research outlined in Article:** Eime, R.M., Harvey, J.T., Brown, W.J., Payne, W.R. (2010). Does sports club participation contribute to health-related quality of life? *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise*, 42 (5), 1022-1028.

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Researchers at the University of Ballarat are uncovering the health and well being benefits of physical activity for those that participate in club or group sports.

It is widely acknowledged that physical activity (PA) contributes to general health and well-being but little is known about how different forms of PA can improve health outcomes. A study at the University of Ballarat sought to compare health-related benefits and life satisfaction for women participating in three different forms of PA, specifically club sport, gym activities and walking.

Club sport - unlike gym activities and walking - provides 'group based' PA that provides the recommended levels of PA while also offering greater opportunity for social interaction leading to improved social and mental wellbeing. The researchers predicted that quality of life and life satisfaction would be higher for women who participate in 'group' PA as this contributes to the holistic well-being of individuals - physically, psychologically and socially - than for women who only participate in individual or solitary forms of PA, such as walking or going to the gym.

To test their predictions, the researchers surveyed rural women across three different PA settings: tennis and netball clubs, walking tracks and public gymnasiums. Women were asked about their PA activities and also health-related wellbeing and general life satisfaction.

The findings provide strong support for club sport participation, with women participating in netball and tennis showing improved well being and life satisfaction than for women participating in individual PA activities, such as walking and going to the gym. Club sports appears to have a distinct advantage over solitary PA pursuits by offering PA that is socially-engaging and that can lead to improved mental well being and overall life satisfaction. While all three forms of PA provide opportunities to increase physical activity, only club sport participation is linked to improved mental and social wellbeing.

For sport clubs, there is clear opportunity to build stronger health promotion messages about the merits of organised sport. The social engagement offered by club sports and likely benefits to overall well being could be an important 'draw card' for those in communities who are not physically active.

Promoting the benefits of club sport participation is also particularly beneficial in regional Australia where people are less physically active and more likely to be overweight and obese than their metropolitan counterparts. For rural women who participate in PA their two preferred forms of PA are walking and gym activities, not group PA. The findings from this study would suggest that promoting the benefits of club sports to these women could be of value.

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