



July 23, 2016 – Grand Rapids, MI

Pedelec: The Bottom Line

I want everyone to exercise. Period. It doesn't matter how. You can work within your physical limitations, but everyone needs to exercise. That's why the pedelec story and research study attracted my attention. Combining what you have to do anyway—get to work—with physical activity could be just the ticket. Let's see if this is your ticket to ride.

The Benefits

Even in a study as short as four weeks, there were some health benefits, especially for blood sugar control. For someone at risk for type 2 diabetes, which is just about everyone, it could be a reasonable option. The researchers reported a trend toward a reduction in fat mass, but the study was too short to suggest that would continue. The researchers calculated the average MET use as about five METS, equivalent to moderate intensity exercise such as a fast walk.

If someone wanted to bike to work instead of drive, using a regular bike might be too much to handle for someone who is sedentary; using the pedelec might be a good way to transition to a regular bicycle. Or you could just continue to use the pedelec because you have to pedal continuously to keep the bike moving, and that keeps your heart rate up.

The Problems

I began this week by suggesting that the biggest reason people give as why they can't exercise is time. Using the numbers from the abstract and using three days per week, that would require five hours per day. It could be that some people used the pedelec five days per week, which would reduce the daily time to 2.5 hours per day. That's still a considerable commitment of time.

However, that could balance out by the normal time to commute plus the time to exercise. Two and a half hours a day might be worth it, but five hours? That's a big commitment.

Another practical problem is the area someone has to travel to and from work. Many areas of Grand Rapids aren't really bicycle friendly yet. There have been improvements, but I wouldn't do it if I still worked downtown. Weather is another factor; riding a bike is unrealistic for at least three months a year in the Northern states, and if you don't have a shower at work, that rules out several months in the Southern states.



The Bottom Line

The pedelec is an interesting and innovative way to help the environment—both your personal environment and the reduction in fuel. I think if the commute could be done in an hour each way, and the person worked at it, it would be well worth the investment of time. Once you exceed that time commitment, it might be worth it to find a fitness center on the way to or from work, stop, and catch your workout that way. Move more, one way or another.

Will I see you in [Dallas](#) next Saturday? I sure hope so. Check out the details.

What are you prepared to do today?

Dr. Chet

References:

1. <http://bit.ly/29Rebox>
2. <http://bit.ly/2alaXac>
3. <http://bit.ly/2a0wvtM>

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