



September 1, 2016 – Grand Rapids, MI

## Why You Should Keep Moving

When I read the online articles published with the science-by-headline titles “Exercise Isn’t Enough,” it really got to me. If you’re in the category of following the recommended 30 to 45 minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise five days a week, based on these articles it really doesn’t do you any good if you sit too much the rest of the day. What evidence did they provide?

The articles cited the results of several studies that had subjects fill out questionnaires about their daily activity with follow-ups to find out who got sick and who died. In the largest study with close to a quarter-million people, there were two questions about activity; one was about work and one was about leisure time activity. The other studies they included used questionnaires that were a little more specific as to types of activity and time spent in sedentary activities.

The problem is that the studies were not designed to answer the question of whether there’s an increased risk of death if you’re sedentary in work and play but you spend time exercising. This type of error happens more frequently than it should, even with good quality data collected via questionnaires such as the NHANES study. It’s a basic rule of science that the data-collection tool must reflect the hypothesis being tested; you wouldn’t look at math tests to judge a student’s spelling. The math tests might give you a hint of what you’d find on the spelling tests, but they wouldn’t give you a reliable answer. In science, it’s tempting to go back and analyze existing data asking different questions, especially with the open access to data bases that exists, but that’s very limited in what answers it can provide and how accurate the answers will be.

The intent of this AHA statement was really to call for more research on sedentary lifestyles and the risk of disease, and they demonstrated that there’s a relationship between death and being too sedentary. The error was trying to suggest that even regular exercise isn’t enough to overcome a sedentary lifestyle—that was taking it one step too far. Even worse was suggesting that exercise is in effectual in press releases when there’s no good evidence to support that idea. If that approach made me think “What’s the point of exercising?” for a split second, when I’ve spent my whole career studying the subject, what would it do to someone who’s an expert in some other field but has been out there walking 45 minutes a day? Or someone who’s just started to exercise and wants to quit? If you’re looking for an excuse to not even start, they just gave it to you.

The final statement by this AHA group was: until there’s definitive research, sit less and move more. I would absolutely agree with that. It’s part of my mantra: eat less, eat better, move more. I think the AHA needs to decide on their objective: do they want more clicks because of provocative headlines or do they really want to help citizens change their lifestyle? Because the way announced this could do more harm than good.

Have a great Labor Day weekend. There will be no Saturday message, but we’ll pick things back up on Tuesday. Spend some time moving more this weekend.

What are you prepared to do today?

**Dr. Chet**

Reference: <http://bit.ly/2bBt6Fh>





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