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James F. Sallis

University of California San Diego, La Jolla, CA, USA

Built environment, physical activity and obesity: Findings from the IPEN adult study

Creating more physical activity-supportive built environments is recommended by the World Health Organization for controlling non-communicable diseases. The IPEN (International Physical Activity and Environment Network) Adult Study was undertaken to provide international evidence on associations of built environments with physical activity and weight status in 12 countries on five continents ($n > 14,000$). This presentation features re-analyzed data from eight primary papers to identify patterns of findings across studies. Neighborhood environment attributes, whether measured objectively or by self-report, were strongly related to all physical activity outcomes (accelerometer-assessed total physical activity, reported walking for transport and leisure) and meaningfully related to overweight/obesity. The differences in total objective physical activity minutes/week across the least and most activity-supportive neighborhoods were 35 minutes/week with environments measured by GIS and a similar 41 minutes/week by self-report measures. Relative effect sizes across the least and most activity-supportive neighborhoods accounted for up to a 13.3% difference in prevalence of overweight/obesity. Multi-variable indexes of built environment variables were more consistently related to all outcomes than single-environment variables. Designing activity-supportive built environments should be a higher international health priority. Results provide evidence in support of global initiatives to increase physical activity and control non-communicable diseases while achieving sustainable development goals.

Keywords: Walkability, walking, transportation, BMI, GIS, accelerometer, international

Biography:

James F. Sallis, Ph.D is Distinguished Professor Emeritus in the School of Public Health at University of California San Diego and Professorial Fellow at Australian Catholic University, Melbourne. His health improvement programs have been studied and used in health care settings, schools, universities, and companies. His current research interests are promoting physical activity and understanding policy and environmental influences on physical activity, nutrition, and obesity. He has authored over 700 scientific publications and is one of the world's most cited authors. Dr. Sallis is Past-President of Society of Behavioral Medicine and member of the US National Academy of Medicine.