of participants.[12] Among those at the lower end of the spectrum of physical activity—that is, more sedentary or less fit people such as women or older men—moderate intensity activity is sufficient. In those more active or physically fit or younger, vigorous activity may be needed to provide additional benefit.[12] This may also be true of the control group in the study by Rothenbacher *et al*[9] as these were blood donors who are more likely to be healthier and fitter than the general population and thus more intense activity may be required to achieve benefit.

BENEFIT OF MODERATE ACTIVITY

The large body of evidence that moderate intensity activity is sufficient to produce benefit must come as good news for many.[2 7 8 12] Despite the widely acknowledged benefits of physical activity, the majority of people in the UK take little or no exercise. The latest Health Survey for England (data from 2003) showed that only about 37% of men and 24% of women meet the current guidelines of 30 minutes of moderate activity on most days suggested by the government[6] and this decreases to 17% and 12%, respectively, in the elderly (> 65 years). In the United States the situation is similar with only 36% of men and 21% of women engaged in regular leisure time physical activity.[13] The growing body of literature suggest that middle-aged and older people may obtain significant health benefit by maintaining or increasing physical activity and that even moderate intensity activity such as walking is sufficient to achieve benefit.[2 7 8] In these sedentary populations encouraging inactive people to take up moderate intensity exercise such as regular brisk walking for their health is more likely to be attainable than requiring inactive people to engage in vigorous activities such as sporting activities.

Physical activity not only reduces risk of CHD—there is increasing evidence that regular exercise reduces the risk of type 2 diabetes.[14] Regular physical activity may also prevent stroke[2] and prevent and reverse disability.[15] With the increasing elderly population, physical activity becomes of particular importance and should be positively encouraged and facilitated in elderly people.

Optimal benefit for coronary risk appears to be seen in people who undertake physical activity from an early age and maintain this through later adulthood.[9] Thus encouraging participation in physical activity should start early. But for those who have been inactive for most of their adulthood, it is never too late to start.

No conflict of interest

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STAMPS IN CARDIOLOGY

World Health Day

The theme for World Health Day in 1992 was "Heart Beat: The Rhythm of Health". Nigeria issued a set of four stamps; two depicting a sphygmomanometer, one the heart and great vessels, and the fourth the thorax. Each stamp bears the World Health Organisation logo. The stamps are relatively rare for the issue being imperforate pairs.

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World Health Day

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