PROXIMITY TO AN EXERCISE FACILITY AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN CHINA

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Abstract. Physical inactivity is a major risk factor for premature morbidity and mortality. We studied the relationship between proximity to an exercise facility and leisure time physical activity in China. We conducted a questionnaire-based survey of 10 provinces in China during 2012 among 5,000 respondents with a completion rate of 82.1%. Respondents were asked about leisure time physical activity, defined as any exercise during the week. Respondents were also asked if they lived within 10 minutes walking distance from an exercise facility. The association between proximity to an exercise facility and physical activity were examined with multivariate regression analysis while attempting to control for sociodemographic factors and province of residence. Proximity to an exercise facility was found to be positively associated with leisure time physical activity. Individuals living within 10 minutes walking distance from an exercise facility were 6.79% (95% confidence interval: 3.67-10.01) more likely to have any leisure time physical activity than those who lived more than 10 minutes walking distance from an exercise facility. Physical exercise among females, younger adults, people with a higher education and urban residents appeared to have a greater association with distance to an exercise facility. Improving accessibility to an exercise facility might increase the likelihood of leisure time physical activity, especially among working-age urban Chinese.

Keywords: exercises, physical activity, facility access, distance perceptions, China