



e-quilibrium

- *“electronic briefs on behavior and health”*

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PAnacea

pan · a · ce · a

n : “a remedy for all ills or difficulties; cure-all.”

It reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease and some cancers. It can increase bone density and aid in the management of lipids and glucose. It has an anti-inflammatory effect. It is known to enhance mood and can improve mild to moderate depression. It tends to improve sleep. It is associated with a greater sense of well-being and self-confidence. It aids in stress management. It is an important ingredient in weight management. It is clearly health-enhancing.

While technically not a panacea, it is arguably the closest thing known to us. Paradoxically, while it is available to all at least in some form, only about one quarter of American adults gets enough of it to derive these health benefits. It, of course, is physical activity (PA).

Indeed there are many barriers to getting adequate PA, but a knowledge deficit about the importance of PA typically is not one of the barriers. The problem is that knowledge itself doesn't change behavior. To begin or increase PA, a person usually needs to change one's routine (e.g., using stairs instead of the elevator), schedule (e.g., putting the 30 minute walk in the daily planner), or environment (e.g., moving the storage boxes off the treadmill). It's a highly individualized process as no strategy or plan works for everyone. There are regular

opportunities to be more physically active, if we identify and capitalize on them.

I'm intentionally addressing the topic of physical activity in the spring, as it is a good time to walk outdoors. To those of you among the quarter of adults already getting enough PA, continue to enjoy the myriad of health benefits. To the rest of you, if health and well-being are among your personal goals, a good place to start is with the PAnacea!

Paul J. Hershberger, Ph.D.

... is a clinical health psychologist. He is an Associate Professor of Family Medicine, and Director of Behavioral Science for the Dayton Community Family Practice Residency Program, Wright State University School of Medicine. His clinical practice includes psychotherapy, consultation, and coaching.

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To contact Dr. Hershberger:
e-mail: paul.hershberger@wright.edu
phone: (937) 278-6251, ext 2021