Session Name: Dr. Sarah Warber - How About a Walk in the Park? Green Exercise for Wellbeing

Session Type: Q&A
Date: 01 Oct 2015 08:00AM – 07 Oct 2015 05:00PM

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So many of the studies presented today are based in other countries, with much different health care systems. Would you hypothesize generalization to a US population? Can you speak to studies or lack thereof here?

In the US, I see insurance companies or employers rewarding people who engage in a program like 'Walking for Health' by lowering premiums or providing some other incentive. Unfortunately that does not provide funding for the organizational costs of a program. In the US, that organizational cost might be taken up by organizations (health systems, employers, non-profits) that are invested in fostering population health.

As an integrative medicine provider, I routinely recommend inclusion of nature in daily life, whether from a window view, or a walk in the park, or other engagement. It's a great activity for busy families that can provide mental & physical benefits for all ages.

I haven't seen many studies done in the US yet. Our fragmented health care system may be an obstacle. On the other hand, there is ample room for innovation that takes the local context, barriers and facilitators into account.
Are there ways for people that cannot walk in a park (eg. immobilized, bedridden, frail, elderly) to still experience wellbeing through green exercise?

Comments (2)

Anonymous • 01 Oct 11:12AM

Is green exercise accessible to individuals of varying economic statuses (given the time needed to participate, the access to the green places, etc)?

Anonymous • 01 Oct 11:22AM

Window views, sitting in nature, nature photographs, sounds of nature, live plants can all bring some of the benefits of nature to those who are physically limited. Our hospital has a large indoor garden/atrium area that provides many benefits of being in a park. The exercise part might take some creativity, but I would think that physical therapists are experts at making that kind of adaptation - we need to be sure that the green (and blue) environments are readily available. - Sara Warber MD

Comments (1)

Anonymous • 01 Oct 11:30AM

What about visiting a botanical garden- a place that is more manicured (less natural looking, maybe?) compared to a naturalized area?

Anonymous • 01 Oct 11:22AM

Have you noticed significant cultural differences between attitudes toward green exercise in the UK and the US?

Anonymous • 01 Oct 11:30AM

What about visiting a botanical garden- a place that is more manicured (less natural looking, maybe?) compared to a naturalized area?

Comments (1)

(Custom) Sara Warber, MD • 0 upvotes • 0 downvotes

Personally, I find that I respond to nature where ever it is. I can be captivated by a 'weed' that has the strength to grow up in the crack between a building and the sidewalk! That more manicured space may give cues to safety & care that allows some people to be able to appreciate the nature more. The wilder places may have a profound effect, producing awe and wonder in others. 'Fit' may be an important concept to evaluate or acknowledge in programming.
Anonymous  •  01 Oct 11:01AM

It's wonderful that you as a physician recognize the power of cross pollination - how can we get other disciplines to recognize "nature" as integral to health and wellbeing?

Comments (1)

(Custom) Sara Warber, MD  •  0 upvotes  •  0 downvotes
Sharing compelling evidence and stories wherever possible.

Anonymous  •  01 Oct 11:29AM

Do you do informed consent for all the nature walkers?

Comments (1)

(Custom) Sara Warber, MD  •  0 upvotes  •  0 downvotes
The informed consent for our study was done in two ways. People in the Walking for Health database, could 'opt out' of receiving information about the study. Those who received an invitation to join the study, read a simple consent form prior to deciding whether they would fill out the two surveys.

Anonymous  •  01 Oct 11:03AM

What does the evidence of forest bathing tell us?

Anonymous  •  01 Oct 11:18AM

Interesting finding about perception of species diversity and results. How do you think this is tied to either purpose of visit or attentional factors?
Anonymous • 01 Oct 11:36AM

Any data on lawn / yard work, or sitting in back yard?

Comments (1)

(Custom) Sara Warber, MD • 0 upvotes • 0 downvotes

Something to investigate. We love our yards here in America and are willing to put enormous effort into them and often consider them a very special part of our relaxation, don't we?

(Custom) Julie Weinans-heuvels • 01 Oct 11:37AM

Were different seasons evaluated for the group walks?

Comments (1)

(Custom) Sara Warber, MD • 0 upvotes • 0 downvotes

The study took place in the fall. Seasonality could certainly have a major influence on frequency and duration of walking behaviors. Although I have heard it said that there is 'no bad weather, only bad clothing' (and footwear).

(Custom) Julie Weinans-heuvels • 01 Oct 11:28AM

You completed a health screen prior to your research. Did you complete any objective measures following WfH program?

Comments (1)

(Custom) Sara Warber, MD • 0 upvotes • 0 downvotes

No, but that would be an ideal addition to this type of research. As would use of physiologic measures.

Anonymous • 01 Oct 11:41AM
Are there places in the USA that have Green Exercise as part of a community?

Anonymous • 01 Oct 11:42AM
In the teenage group, did you measure stress from initially being without electronic access vs later when they had acculturated to no access and increased skills and, assumably, greater self esteem?

Anonymous • 01 Oct 11:43AM
In terms of methods, you and your team have drawn a lot of info from survey data--what other data sources would you like to explore? Or would you like to be explored in other nature-health studies?

Anonymous • 01 Oct 12:08PM
Are insurance companies reimbursing when you write a "nature rx"?