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Walking Towards a Healthier Future: A Pocket Guide to Walking Routes in Colchester and the Health Benefits of Walking

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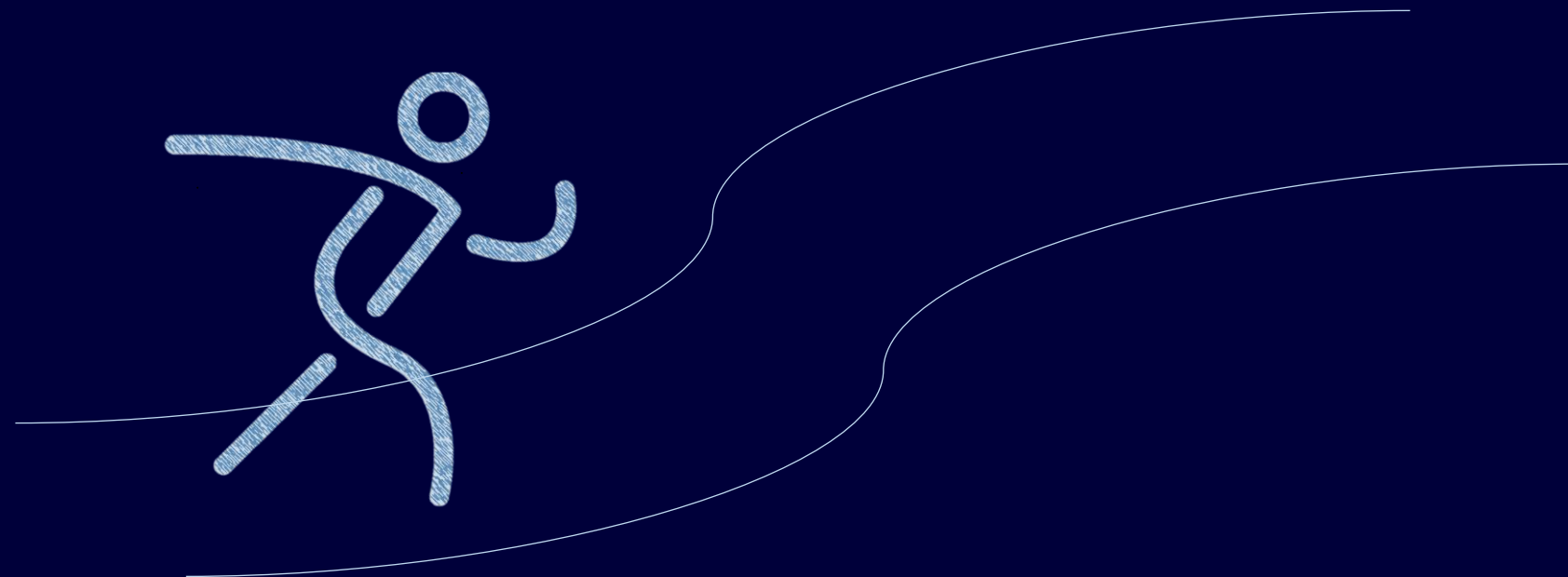
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Walking Towards A Healthier Future

A pocket guide to walking routes in Colchester and the
health benefits of walking

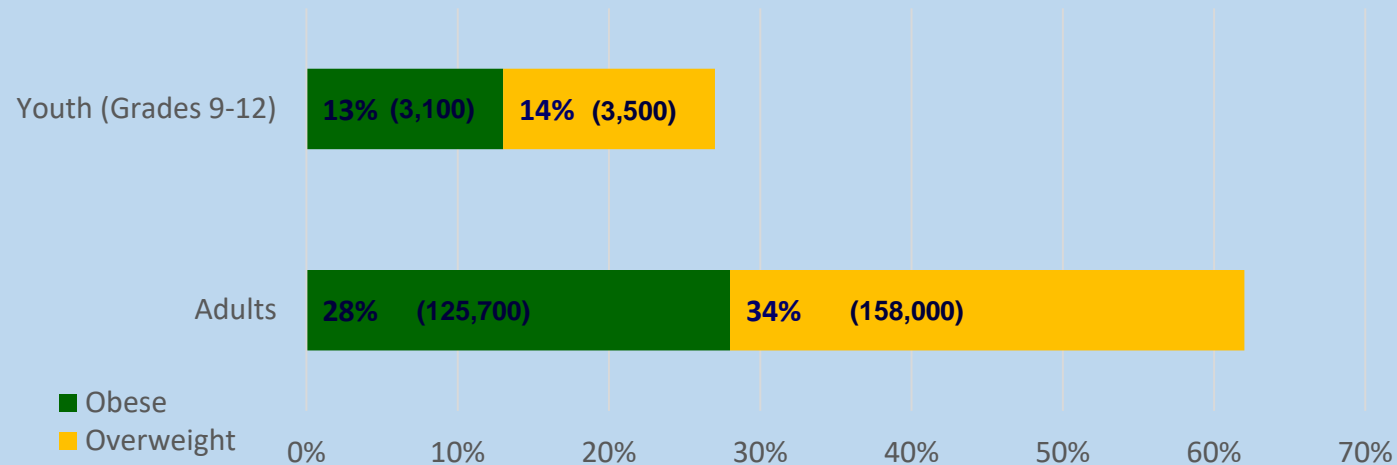


Kevin DiBona
September-October 2021
Mentor: Dr. Anthony Williams

Problem Identification

According to the CDC and Vermont Department of Health, obesity is associated with worse mental health outcomes, reduced quality of life, and chronic health conditions such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and some cancers. All associated with increased morbidity and mortality. [1,2]

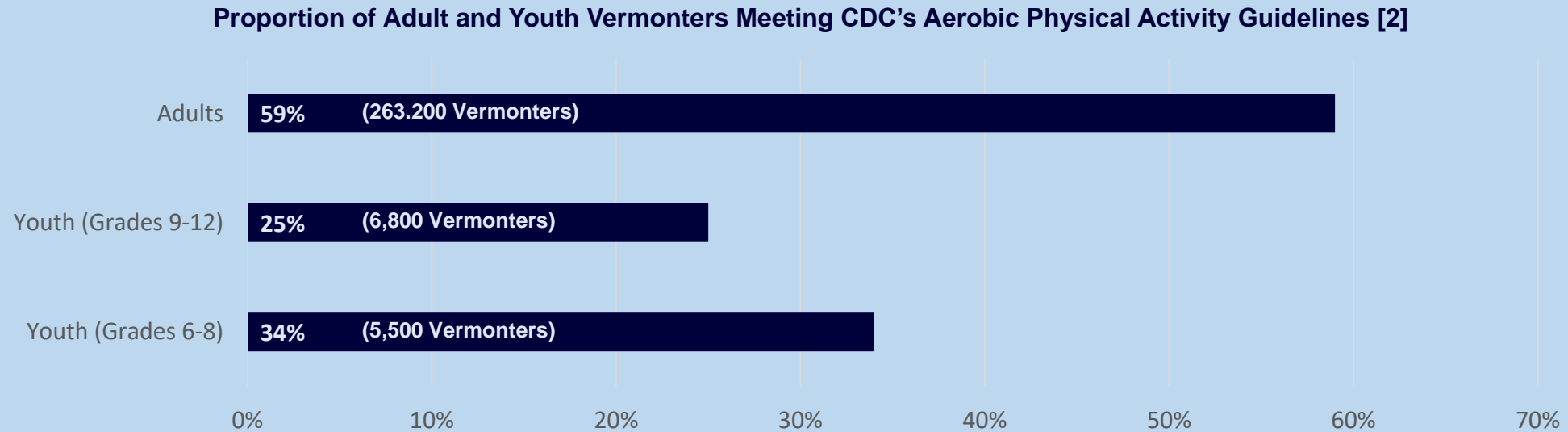
Overweight & Obesity Prevalence Among Vermonters in 2016 [2]



The obesity epidemic is a complex problem necessitating a multifaceted long-term response. While there is no single solution to this decade-evolving issue, exercise remains one of the most important health interventions available. [3]

Problem Identification

Sustained walking programs result in modest weight loss, even without a restrictive diet-component, are easier to implement compared to other physical activity regimens, and promote health benefits that can reduce the rate and burden of chronic disease associated with obesity. [3,4,5]

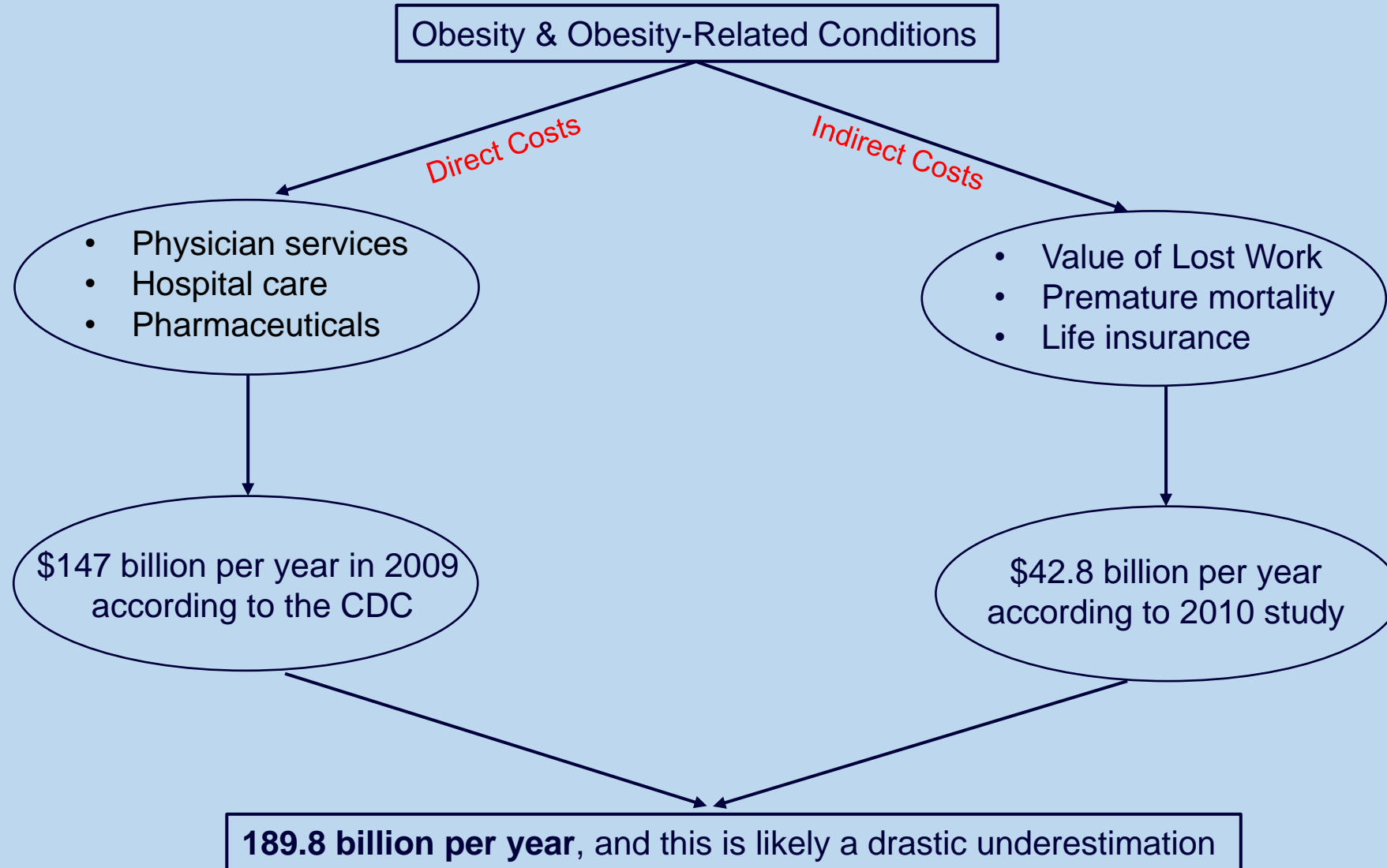


Numerous psycho socio-economic barriers to regular walking have been reported by patients including: [6]

- Lack of time
- Confidence/skill-level
- Fear of injury
- Confusion about walking guidelines
- Lack of knowledge regarding places to walk

Addressable Barriers

Public Health Cost



[7,8]

Community Perspective

**Dr. Benjamin Clements
Colchester Family Medicine**

“This [obesity] is certainly a large topic, and I try to encourage my patients to stay active in addition to lifestyle, and dietary changes. But there are so many great places to walk in Colchester, giving patients access to that information who might not otherwise know seems like a manageable bite into the larger issue at hand.”

**Anonymous
Colchester Parks & Recreation Employee**

“I find that people call daily to ask about our hiking and walking trails, and across generations as well – so I think we do a good job of making ourselves available and getting the information out there. I don't see why this project wouldn't be helpful. Giving folks more information regarding the walking trails will only help foster increased use.”

Intervention And Methods

Designed a smart phrase for providers at Colchester Family Medicine to implement into patient communications.

Smart Phrase Contents:

- CDC physical activity guidelines
- Health benefits of regular exercise and/or walking
- Information on Vermont's State Park Pass
- Online resources for local walking routes
- Consolidated list of walking paths and minor hikes local to the Colchester area



[9]



[10]

Results

As of October 2021, the smart phrase was shared and provided to staff at Colchester Family Medicine. Due to time limitations, no feedback or data was collected from patients or providers regarding its efficacy.

Assuming the smart phrase is successfully implemented, I would hope for it to achieve three overarching goals:

1. Break Barriers

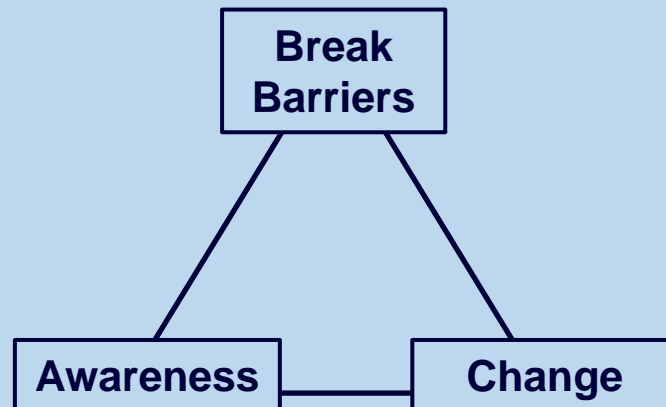
- Address and quell patient-perceived barriers to regular walking (fear of injury, confusion surrounding guidelines, not knowing areas to walk).

2. Awareness

- Reinforce the benefit of exercise for systemic health, and weight loss.
- Raise awareness of online and community resources available to patients.

3. Change

- Motivate overweight and obese patients to begin walking and engaging in greater physical activity
- Reinvigorate those already on an exercise regimen by providing potential new walking locations



Evaluation of Effectiveness

To evaluate the utility and efficacy of this project, I would implement a Likert scale survey through REDCap; focusing primarily on assessing if the smart phrase was beneficial in promoting lifestyle change, raising awareness of local resources, and addressing patient barriers to physical activity. I would also gather qualitative feedback regarding overall design, layout, and content utility.

Limitations

While exercise and/or walking is important in the prevention and treatment of obesity, the overall issue is quite complex, and necessitates an equally involved counter-strategy. There is risk of becoming overly reductionist and insensitive in assuming that exercise is a “cure-all”.

Some patients who are obese, or overweight, are physically limited due to chronic disability, frailty, or other circumstances. Neither walking, nor the smart phrase, may be appropriate or useful for this patient population.

Many parts of the smart phrase are specific to Colchester and are not generalizable outside the area of Chittenden county.

Future Project Ideas

- Adapt this work to different counties and townships around Vermont.
 - Method and process is easily generalizable and reproducible.
 - Benefit to implementing a resource like this into additional primary care clinics.
- Modify this work to target those who are overweight or obese and unable to walk due to physical limitations or disability.
- Assess the utility of Smartwatches as a tool to promote walking and other physical activity in those who are overweight or obese.
 - Do those who utilize a smartwatch feel more intrinsically motivated to lose weight?
 - Do they end up burning more calories or walking more steps compared to non-smartwatch counterparts?
- Given that obesity is a multifactorial condition, with many underlying psycho socio-economic factors, it would be interesting to look at other major areas for intervention (diet, FDA/governmental regulations) and generate similar information with patients in mind.

References

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- [10] Walts Photos. (2016). Colchester Pond. photograph, Burlington.

Interview Consent

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. This project is a requirement for the Family Medicine clerkship. It will be stored on the Dana Library ScholarWorks website. Your name will be attached to your interview, and you may be cited directly or indirectly in subsequent unpublished or published work. The interviewer affirms that he/she has explained the nature and purpose of this project. The interviewee affirms that he/she has consented to this interview.

Consented

Name: Dr. Benjamin Clements

Name: (Anonymous) Colchester Parks & Recreation Employee