



## POKÉMON GO AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

# Pokémon GO: are limited physical activity benefits undermined by McFlurries consumed?

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We welcome attempts from Howe and colleagues to evaluate the impact of Pokémon GO,<sup>1</sup> which is the most downloaded smartphone app of all time. This, and nearly all other known Pokémon GO analyses, limit their investigations to the number of steps taken or other markers of physical activity.<sup>2,3</sup> But what about changes in diet?

Central to players' progression through the game is accessing "gyms," where captured Pokémon can battle each other and earn rewards. These virtual gyms are placed in proximity to buildings or objects that are meant to have local cultural significance. If players place one of their Pokémon in a gym, they can receive 10 "PokeCoins" (£0.08; €0.09; \$0.10) a day to reinvest in other items to help "catch 'em all." Pokémon GO players therefore tend to congregate around gyms. But what if gyms are not in buildings of cultural significance but rather fast food restaurants?

It is perhaps unsurprising that a game promoting physical activity has succumbed to the commercial power of the fast food industry. McDonald's was the first sponsor of Pokémon GO, and when the game was launched in Japan gyms were placed in nearly all 3000 McDonald's restaurants.<sup>4</sup> Alongside giving away Pokémon toys with children's meals,<sup>5</sup> McDonald's created designated seating areas for Pokémon GO players to battle their monsters without disturbing non-playing customers.

The footfall attracted to Pokémon gyms in McDonald's restaurants is evident in Steve Easterbrook's quote: "We are enjoying what [Pokémon Go] is doing for business at the moment."<sup>4</sup> Presumably, business is up.

With research suggesting that the physical activity benefits of Pokémon GO are short term at best, and with users being drawn to fast food restaurants to meet other gamers, we suggest that future Pokémon GO studies count the number of McFlurries consumed in addition to the number of steps taken.

Competing interests: None declared.

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