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## Encouraging stair walking

A motivational poster placed at a choice point between escalator and stair use, in a city centre underground station, doubled stair use (fig 1).<sup>1</sup> The study also showed that men and boys used the stairs more than women and girls both before and after the poster intervention, but there was no obvious explanation of this finding.<sup>2</sup> Follow up interviews with 200 stair users or escalator users showed that motivational posters can change the behaviour of people who are not very active as not all those using the stairs were regularly active. The barriers to stair use were time, laziness, and effort, while the motivations for stair use were saving time and improving health. Women cited laziness as the key barrier to stair climbing and in comparison with men perceived stair climbing as requiring more effort.<sup>3</sup>

The study results led to the design and distribution of stair walking promotional posters throughout Scottish workplaces by the Health Education Board for Scotland. Within Glasgow a new promotional campaign was developed using life size cut out cartoon characters placed at the foot of escalators, as posters on platforms, and as advertising cards on trains (fig 2). These materials encouraged stair use and had straplines explaining the health benefits of small amounts of physical



Figure 1 Motivational poster placed between stairs and escalators.

activity. The campaign has run for two 12-week periods in all Glasgow underground venues. Several other studies have shown the efficacy of motivational signs promoting stair use.

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- 2 Mutrie N, Blamey A, Aitchison T. Why do fewer women choose the stairs? *J Sports Sci* 1996;14:16-17.
- 3 Mutrie N, Blamey A, Mitchell J. What stops people choosing the stairs? *Proceedings of the American College of Sports Medicine Physical Activity Interventions Conference, Dallas, 1997.*



Figure 2 Promotional campaign. Reproduced with permission of the Greater Glasgow Health Board.