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## **UCT research affirms benefits of walking to promote health**

In his thesis titled *Steps that count! The use of pedometry for physical activity and health promotion in South Africa (SA)*, the University of Cape Town PhD graduate Julian Pillay investigates how walking can promote good health in the working adult population of SA.

Pillay's thesis is among the first pedometer-based research in SA. Pedometers are low-cost motion sensors, usually worn on a belt or waistband, which provides data on steps taken by the wearer. The study explores the relationship between the number of steps and their intensity, and the current public health recommendations for physical activity. Pillay's findings show that the link between walking and achieving positive health results is strengthened by the number and intensity of steps – in other words, the speed of walking.

Most researchers agree that 100 steps per minute is a reasonable rate for engaging in moderately intense physical activity.

The research also confirms that a self-selected pace for "brisk" walking is compatible with moderate-intensity physical activity, and supports current messages that use the term "brisk" walking as a reference for health-enhancing physical activity. "Outcomes of this research can be used to supplement and improve physical activity and exercise prescription," says Pillay.

The research has provided objective insight into the walking patterns of SA's employed population in relation to fitness and health. "Through the study we were able to establish how active employed adults are, in terms of the total number of steps they accumulate, as well as how much of these steps are a moderate-vigorous intensity, as per public health recommendations," says Pillay.

"Pedometer-based physical activity and health promotion initiatives can be used as a vehicle for community engagement on public health awareness," adds Pillay. Current public health recommendations for physical activity include 30 minutes of moderate-vigorous intensity physical activity at least five times per week, in bouts of at least 10 minutes in duration.

Pillay will graduate with a PhD in exercise science on 6 June 2013 at 15h00.

**ENDS**

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