



7th EFSMA - European Sports Medicine Congress

3rd Central European Congress of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
Annual Assembly of the German and the Austrian Society of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation

Salzburg, 26th - 29th October 2011



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Physical activity, isometric strength and body composition of university students

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Objective: The importance of physical activity in promoting health and well-being of the young adult population is evidenced by several epidemiological studies. The increasing incidence in this population of cardiovascular, metabolic and degenerative diseases and obesity has been linked with an epidemic variable, the sedentary behavior, and commonly dubbed the “disease of the century”. Regular physical activity may contribute to the development of muscle strength, improve the quality of soft tissue and bone mass, and decreased body fat. The early inclusion of regular physical activity and other healthy lifestyles tend to be incorporated throughout life with noticeable gains in health and quality of life in adult life.

In this study we assessed the physical activity level (PAL), muscle strength (MS) and body composition (BC) of 84 young adults in higher education with the following objectives: assess physical activity; evaluate different manifestations of muscle strength; assess body composition and analyze the relationship between muscle strength, body composition and physical activity in young adults.

Material/Methods: We drew up a descriptive, correlational and cross-cutting study. To achieve our objective we collected the following data:

- a) Physical activity: short version of IPAQ (International Physical Activity Questionnaire).
- b) Muscle strength: hand grip of both hands with Jamar[®] Hand Dynamometer;
- c) Key pinch strength with digital dynamometer Baseline[®];
- d) Maximum isometric strength of the quadriceps in seat 45-degree incline leg press machine linked to a strain gauge Ergo Meter – Globus[®] and appropriated software
- f) Body composition: bioelectric impedance on Tanita Ironman Body Composition Monitor[®]
- g) Height: stadiometer Seca[®]

Results: A total of 84 university students were subject to this study, 66 females and 18 males with an average of 20,9±2,3 years old. In IPAQ classification we found 50 students with low, 25 with moderate and 9 with high level of physical activity. Relatively to muscle strength there were significant correlations between handgrip strength (both hands), key pinch strength (both hands) and isometric maximum strength of the quadriceps. Analysing body composition we can observe that female students with more IMC and more body fat present higher levels of physical activity. Regarding the male students, we can find the opposite: the lesser the percentage of body fat and lower IMC levels the higher physical activity. We found no relation between the different strength demonstrations and the levels of physical activity. When correlating handgrip strength (right hand; left hand) with body composition, we observed correlations between:

- Height (0,704**; 0,705**), total body fat (-0,412**; -0,428**), weight (0,406**; 0,463**), body water (0,441**; 0,453**), visceral fat level (0,223*; 0,259*), bone mass (0,800**; 0,798**) and muscular mass (0,816**; 0,803**).

When correlating key pinch strength (right hand; left hand) with body composition, we observed correlations between:

- Height (0,577**; 0,531**), total body fat (-0,389**; -0,252*), weight (0,336**; 0,424**), body water (0,449**; 0,348**), bone mass (0,638**; 0,657**) and muscular mass (0,677**; 0,684**).

When correlating maximum isometric strength of the quadriceps with body composition, we observed correlations between:

- Height (0,355**), total body fat (-0,389**), body water (0,389**), bone mass (0,480**) and muscular mass (0,490**).

Conclusion: Results indicate that the evaluated university students are mainly sedentary. We also concluded that there are very strong positive correlations between the different manifestations of strength and that there is no relationship between the different manifestations of strength and levels of physical activity. Analyzing our results, we can conjecture about why young people do exercise: females exercise themselves to lose height and males to maintain physical condition. But there are strong correlations between the different manifestations of strength and the different variables of body composition.

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