

Goal of increasing heart rate only part of fitness programs

Recently, a participant in our cardiac rehabilitation program approached me with a perplexing question.



fitness
Barry Franklin

"If the object of your exercise program is to increase my heart rate to a certain level, and hold it there for 30 to 40 minutes, why can't I just sit in a steam room or sauna to raise my heart rate? Wouldn't I get comparable benefits if my heart rate response was similarly elevated?" he asked.

I pondered his question for a moment and realized that his logic probably reflected a misconception that many people have — that the increase in heart rate, per se, is what actually causes the body to become physically fit. Unfortunately, this is not the case.

Although a regular, sustained increase in heart rate is generally recognized as important to achieving improved cardiovascular fitness, the heart rate response merely serves as a monitor for the real training stimulus, increased body metabolism or oxygen consumption.

THINK OF IT this way. Many real-life situations may evoke an abrupt increase in heart rate, yet overall breathing and energy expenditure may remain essentially unchanged. The steam room or sauna example, previously mentioned, would be a case in point.

Also, if we become extremely anxious or upset, our heart rate may remain elevated for some time, yet we are not really getting the equivalent of an exercise session. If this were the case, high-strung, nervous individuals would be among the most physically fit people in the world!

Recently I gave a one-hour talk before a rather large audience. I took my heart rate several times during the presentation and found it ranged from 108 to 144 beats per

minute. Was I getting the equivalent of a low-intensity exercise session during the talk? Of course not.

ANOTHER WAY of disproving the notion that pronounced increases in heart rate are needed to enhance fitness is to study cardiac patients who are taking medications called beta-blockers.

These drugs can markedly decrease the heart rate at rest and during exercise. As a result, some cardiac patients have resting heart rates in the 50s, and exercise heart rates in the 80s or 90s. Fortunately, such individuals can still achieve normal improvements in fitness with regular aerobic exercise participation.

Additional evidence, refuting the rise in heart rate as the "key" to in-

creased fitness, comes from a study that appeared in the medical literature several years ago.

Cardiac patients who had pacemakers that maintained a constant heart rate, regardless of their activity level, showed substantial improvements in their exercise capacity following a physical conditioning program. And, during the exercise sessions, their heart rates never budged from the values noted at rest.

In summary, an increase in heart rate alone does not actually cause the body to become physically conditioned. Instead, it is the rise in oxygen in the favorable adaptation and improvement. Although increases in heart rate are often paralleled by increases in these variables, this is not always the case.

Barry A. Franklin is director of Cardiac Rehabilitation and Exercise Laboratories, William Beaumont Hospital, Royal Oak, and associate professor of physiology, Wayne State University School of Medicine.

High school journalists to compete

High school journalists from Oakland County and throughout the state are invited to participate in the 1990-91 High School Journalism Contest, sponsored by the Michigan Press Women.

The contest is open to all Michigan high school students who have had their work printed in a newspaper, school newspaper, yearbook or other

publication between Jan. 16, 1990 and Jan. 17, 1991.

Categories are: news, sports, features, editorials, columns and photography. First, second and third place certificates will be awarded in each category and all first place winners will be entered in the National Federation of Press Women contest.

Rules and entry blanks are being mailed to all Michigan newspapers and high schools. Michigan contest entries must include a completed entry blank and must be postmarked by Jan. 18, 1991.

Michigan Press Women will honor winners at a Youth Awards Luncheon in Kalamazoo on Feb. 23. MPW also will assist any student winning

first place in the national competition to attend the national awards luncheon at DisneyWorld, Orlando, Fla. in June.

For more information, contact Naida A. Ayadi, director, MPW High School Journalism contest, 1105 Eastfield, Lansing, MI 48917. Phone: 517/323-3111.

OCC presenting: 'I Do, I Do'

The musical comedy "I Do, I Do" will be presented Friday at the Highland Lakes Campus of Oakland Community College.

The production whimsically traces the ups and downs of a man and woman through their married life.

The production is the third of the 1990-91 Performing Arts Series. Curtain time is 8 p.m. Admission is \$7 for adults and \$6 for students. The campus is at 7350 Cooley Lake Road, Union Lake. Additional information is available at 360-3057 or 360-3041.



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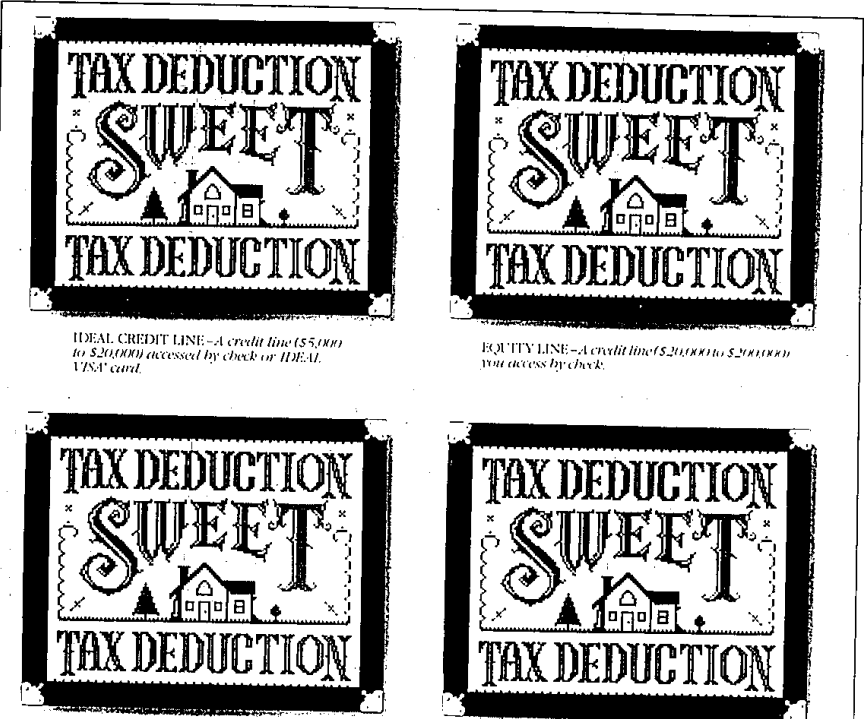
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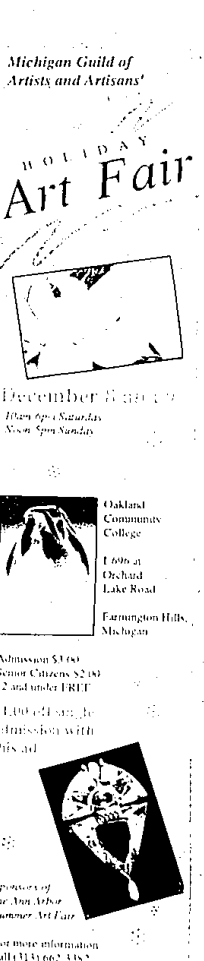
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