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Title: Differences between smokers who completed or dropped out of a program to increase daily physical activity

Ms. Mahara 20770 Proença mahara.proenca@gmail.com^{1,2}, Ms. Juliana 20771 Gomes Zabatiero juzabatiero@yahoo.com.br¹, Ms. Demetria 20772 Kovelis dkovelis@yahoo.com.br¹, Mr. Leandro 20773 Cruz Mantoani leandromantoani@yahoo.com.br¹, Ms. Karina 20774 Couto Furlanetto ka_furlanetto@hotmail.com¹, Ms. Andrea 20775 Akemi Morita andrea.morita@yahoo.com.br¹, Ms. Gianna 20776 Kelren Waldrich Bisca giannabisca@gmail.com¹ and Mr. Fábio 20777 Pitta fabiopitta@uol.com.br¹.

¹ Laboratório de Pesquisa em Fisioterapia Pulmonar (LFIP), Departamento de Fisioterapia, Universidade Estadual de Londrina (UEL), Londrina, PR, Brazil and ² Departamento de Fisioterapia, Universidade Estadual do Norte do Paraná, Jacarezinho, PR, Brazil .

Body: Background: Initiatives to increase physical activity in daily life (PADL) of smokers are important, although interventions in this population are frequently characterized by high dropout rates. Objectives: To investigate and compare the characteristics of smokers who completed or dropped out of a program to increase PADL. Methods: 105 smokers with normal lung function started a 5-month program which aimed at increasing PADL by using pedometers (DigiWalker SW-200 Yamax) in order to achieve a target of 10000 steps/day. Participants responded to questionnaires concerning smoking history (cigarettes/day and pack-years index), quality of life (SF-36) and anxiety and depression symptoms (State-Trait Anxiety Inventory and Beck Depression Inventory, respectively). Lung function (spirometry) and functional exercise capacity (6-minute walking test) were also assessed, besides baseline PADL assessment with a pedometer for six days. Results: When comparing smokers who completed the program (n=54; 27 male) with those who dropped out (n=51; 16 male), there were significant differences concerning age (51[47-58] vs 48[36-51] years, respectively; p=0.004; median[IQR]); pack-years (35[19-47] vs 23[13-40]), respectively; p=0.03), PADL (8746[6059-11029] vs 7226[4060-9120] steps/day, respectively; p=0.01) and most SF-36 dimensions, especially physical function (90[80-100] vs 85[64-91], respectively; p=0.005). Conclusions: Smokers who dropped out of the program were younger, physically less active and with worse quality of life than those who completed it. In protocols aiming at increasing daily physical activity of smokers, strategies must be developed to avoid these target subjects to dropout.