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# FANTASTIC Lifestyle Survey Of University of Waterloo Employees

## SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to survey selected health behaviors of University of Waterloo employees. The FANTASTIC lifestyle questionnaire was distributed to all employees. Results indicate that, overall, the university's employees' health behaviors are good. However, there is room for improvement in the areas of physical activity, tobacco use, insight and career, particularly for the women surveyed. The data from the study will be used to direct the university's Campus Health Promotion program planning. (Can Fam Physician 1984; 30:1869-1872).

## SOMMAIRE

Le but de cette étude fut d'examiner certaines des habitudes de santé pré-sélectionnées chez des employés de l'Université de Waterloo. Le questionnaire sur le mode de vie dit FANTASTIC fut distribué à tous les employés. Les résultats indiquent qu'en général, les employés de l'université ont de bonnes habitudes de santé. Cependant, il y a place pour une amélioration dans les domaines de l'activité physique, de tabagisme, de l'introspection et de la carrière, surtout chez les femmes. Les données de cette étude serviront à l'élaboration d'un programme de promotion de la santé sur le campus universitaire.

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**A** SURVEY of current employee health behaviors was proposed by the Campus Health Promotion (CHP), a service introduced to the University of Waterloo in 1979 in response to employees' concern about general health and fitness. The purpose of the study was to provide a description of employee health behaviors and to be a needs assessment and guide for future CHP program planning. CHP's purpose is to promote and assess the health of the campus community and to assist in modifying health risks with

educational assessment and behavioral change programs.

## Methods

The FANTASTIC Lifestyle Questionnaire (research version) (see Figure 1) was selected as the survey instrument. This questionnaire was chosen because of its brevity, simple response mode, five-point scale and selective health behaviors.

During the first week of December 1983, the FANTASTIC Lifestyle questionnaire, and a covering letter explaining the survey, were mailed to all university employees. The questionnaires were anonymous in order to ensure confidentiality, and this precluded follow-up. An article was printed in the campus newspaper to facilitate the response. Copies of the proposed survey were also forwarded to the faculty association, staff association and vice-president's office, before the questionnaire was distributed. To simplify mailing, a self-addressed return envelope accompanied each FANTASTIC questionnaire. Finally, the questionnaires were mailed within three days

after classes were finished for the fall term, presumably at a time when employees would be more receptive to additional paperwork.

## Results

An overall return rate of 44% was obtained from the 2,873 questionnaires mailed on campus (see Figure 1). However, due to missing data, 247 questionnaires were discarded, lowering the actual sample to 36% of the population. The respondents were equally split between male and female, with 72% representing staff and the balance faculty employees. This is similar to the staff/faculty ratio on campus. The return rate was higher for women than for men (44% vs 30%) but there was little difference between the response rate for faculty and staff (34% vs 36%).

The mean age for male and female faculty members was 45 years and 40 years, respectively. The female staff were somewhat younger with a mean age of 35 years, while the male staff had a mean age of 40 years.

Fig. 1.

**FANTASTIC LIFESTYLE ASSESSMENT**

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

For each item, place a ✓ beside the box which best describes your behavior or condition in the past month

<b>F</b> AMILY RIENDS	My communication with others is open, honest and clear	almost always	fairly often	some of the time	seldom	almost never
	I give and receive affection	almost always	fairly often	some of the time	seldom	almost never
	I get the emotional support that I need	almost always	fairly often	some of the time	seldom	almost never
<b>A</b> CTIVITY	Active exercise — 30 minutes eg. running, cycling, fast walk	more than 4 times/week	3 times/week	2 times/week	seldom	never
	Relaxation and enjoyment of leisure time	almost daily	3 - 5 times per week	1 - 2 times per week	less than once/week	almost never
<b>N</b> UTRITION	Balanced meals	almost always	fairly often	some of the time	seldom	almost never
	Breakfast daily	almost always	fairly often	some of the time	seldom	almost never
	Excess sugar, salt, animal fats, or junk foods	almost never	seldom	some of the time	fairly often	almost daily
	Ideal weight	within 5 lbs (2 kg)	within 10 lbs (4 kg)	within 15 lbs (6 kg)	within 20 lbs (8 kg)	not within 20 lbs
<b>T</b> OBACCO OXINS	Tobacco use	none in the past 5 years	none in the past year	none in the past 6 months	1 - 10 times/week	more than 10 times/week
	Abuse of drugs: prescribed and unprescribed	almost never	seldom	some of the time	fairly often	almost daily
	Coffee, tea, cola	never	1 - 2 daily	3 - 6 daily	7 - 10 daily	more than 10 daily
<b>A</b> LCOHOL	Average intake per week	0 - 7 drinks	8 - 10 drinks	11 - 13 drinks	14 - 20 drinks	more than 20 drinks
	Alcohol and driving	never	almost never	only occasional	once a month	often
<b>S</b> LEEP EATBELTS TRESS	7 - 9 hours sleep per night	almost always	fairly often	some of the time	seldom	almost never
	Frequency of seat belt use	always	most of the time	some of the time	seldom	never
	Major stressful events in past year	none	1	2 - 3	4 - 5	more than 5
<b>T</b> YPE OF PERSON ALITY	Sense of time urgency: impatience	almost never	seldom	some of the time	fairly often	almost always
	Competitive and aggressive	almost never	seldom	some of the time	fairly often	almost always
	Feelings of anger & hostility	almost never	seldom	some of the time	fairly often	almost always
<b>I</b> NSIGHT	Positive thinker	almost always	fairly often	some of the time	seldom	never
	Anxiety, worry	almost never	seldom	some of the time	fairly often	almost always
	Depression	almost never	seldom	some of the time	fairly often	almost always
<b>C</b> AREER (Includes home-making, students, etc.)	Satisfied in job or role	almost always	fairly often	some of the time	seldom	almost never
	Good relationships with those around	almost always	fairly often	some of the time	seldom	almost never

STEP 1 Total the ✓'s in each column **1**

STEP 2 Multiply totals by the numbers indicated **2** **X4** **X3** **X2** **X1**

STEP 3 Add your scores across the bottom for your grand total **3**  +  +  +  =  %  
GRAND TOTAL

Thank you for completing the Fantastic Lifestyle Assessment

Please assist us by providing the following information: Sex M  F

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_ Year of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_

The health behaviors of the respondents were generally found to be positive as indicated by the above-average cumulative score for all groups (see Table 1). Women scored slightly lower than men. The highest mean score (75.3%) was obtained by male faculty members, while female staff members had the lowest mean score (72.6%).

**TABLE 1**  
Average Total FANTASTIC Lifestyle Score for University of Waterloo Employees Surveyed

	Staff		Faculty	
	M	F	M	F
Number	258	477	253	34
Mean Score	74.4	72.6	75.3	73.5

The weakest area for both men and women was activity. Fifty-one percent of the men and 61% of the women reported exercising fewer than three times per week.

Differences between men and women were most dramatic in the areas of tobacco use, insight, and career. Almost twice as many women (23%) as men (14%) reported using tobacco more than ten times a week. The female smokers were aged 20-50, whereas the male smokers were primarily aged 50-60.

Twenty-four percent of female respondents reported feelings of anxiety and worry 'fairly often', compared to only 14% of men. In addition, depression "some of the time" and "fairly often" was reported twice as frequently by women (44%) as men (23%). There was a trend with age towards an increase in the number of women who reported feeling depressed "some of the time". This trend was not observed among men.

Job satisfaction categorized as "some of the time" (compared to "almost always" and "fairly often") was reported twice as often by women than men. However, the greater percentage of men and women reported job satis-

faction as "fairly often" and "almost always". The percentage of respondents in these categories tended to increase with age.

Other noteworthy trends were observed in the categories of nutrition and leisure. The nutritional habits of men and women improved with age, as indicated by the strongly positive responses in the older age groups. However, the percentage of women who perceived themselves to be within two kilograms of their ideal body weight decreased with age, while the percentage for men increased (except for those in the 40-50 age group).

A greater percentage of men of all ages indicated that they took time out for relaxation and leisure "almost daily" or "three to five times per week". The only exception was male faculty members aged 40-49, who reported taking leisure time only "one to two times per week". On the other hand, only women in the youngest age group (<29) and the oldest age groups (>60) had the greatest percentage of respondents scoring in the positive ranges. Most respondents aged 30-59 reported taking leisure time only "one to two times per week".

## Discussion

Given that there was no formal follow-up, the overall return rate was considered good. We felt that the composition of the sample reflected that of the university employee population. However, one must be cautious in generalizing the observed trends, because the respondents may represent a biased group of more health-conscious employees.

The trends observed in smoking behavior are similar to those found nationally. More than 60% of the respondents had not used tobacco in the past five years. Young women had the greatest percentage of smokers. This is consistent with a suspected increase in smoking among teenaged girls across Canada. The largest percentage of male smokers was among the 50-60

year olds. These men are probably entrenched smokers, who began smoking in the boom years of the tobacco industry when it was 'fashionable' to smoke.

The greater anxiety, depression and lower job satisfaction reported by women is again consistent with the general population. The majority of working women at the university are in junior staff positions with little opportunity for advancement. Generally, these women hold fulltime jobs, while trying to maintain a home and raise a family. The challenge of this lifestyle is reflected in the lack of leisure time reported by women aged 30-60.

Despite the efforts of the federal government's Participaction program, the most significant finding was the lack of regular physical activity (at least three times per week) by both men and women. This seems to be a difficult health behavior to change. The greatest number of regular exercisers among the staff were found among 20-year-old women and men in their 40s. The male faculty had an impressive record for regular exercise, with more than half the respondents in all age brackets except the 20s exercising at least three times per week.

## Conclusion

From the data, it seems that the university employees completing the FANTASTIC Lifestyle questionnaire generally have positive health behaviors. However, some specific weaknesses were identified such as inactivity, tobacco use among women and older men, and anxiety, worry and depression among women.

Campus Health Promotion offers programs such as Health-Wise Fitness Assessments, Kick-It, and stress management courses which directly or indirectly address the identified weaknesses. The challenge now is to direct these programs more specifically to the identified target groups through health promotion, planning, implementation and evaluation. ●