

42nd APS Annual Conference



Media Release

25 – 29 September 2007: Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre

Exercising to excess bad for health

A psychological study of gym-goers has found 23 per cent of respondents exercised at excessive levels.

Seventy-five per cent of 'excessive exercisers' were motivated to hit the gym to relieve stress and anxiety, according to the Victoria University study.

To be defined as an 'excessive exerciser' participants had to score above average on an exercise dependence questionnaire and exercise more than six hours per week.

The study excluded people with clinical eating disorders and professional or elite athletes.

"While exercise is vital to our health and well-being, when people become addicted to and reliant on exercise, it can be damaging to both their physical and psychological health," said study co-author, Jane Fletcher.

Ms Fletcher, a psychologist, said people who exercise excessively do so even when they are injured, tired or sick.

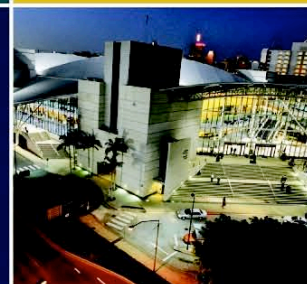
"Sometimes they will even push themselves harder, because it is a challenge to get through it," Ms Fletcher said.

"They regularly turn down invitations with friends and family to go to the gym. Exercise makes them feel really good and if they don't do it, they can feel anxious and withdrawn. This can negatively affect their social life and career."

Study co-author from Victoria University, Andrew Jago, said people who exercised excessively tended to be more extroverted than non-excessive exercisers.

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Elaine Grant
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“These people love being the centre of attention and are often the life of the party. They also tend to display higher levels of drive and competitiveness,” Mr Jago said.

“Exercising is essential for a healthy lifestyle, but you need to find a balance. If you are concerned, visit your local GP or psychologist for advice.”

The study, *‘Reasons for exercise in an Australian gym population,’* was undertaken with 213 participants in Melbourne.

Results from the study will be presented at the 42nd Australian Psychological Society national conference, *‘Psychology Making an Impact,’* at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre from 25 to 29 September.

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Ms Fletcher and Mr Jago are available for interview. For an interview please contact Elaine Grant on 0412 683 068.



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