

UVic researchers find video-game bikes can help boost exercise

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Two University of Victoria kinesiologists have found a way to get physically-inactive video game players moving: Put them on stationary bikes hooked up to video games that require them to both pedal and steer to play.

Compared to those on regular stationary bikes, those on video game or

interactive bikes burned more energy and improved their likelihood of staying active, Ryan Rhodes and Darren Warburton found.

As a specialist in exercise psychology, Rhodes focuses his research on physical activity—or lack of it — in such demographics as new mothers and more recently inactive 20-something males. Ultimately, he seeks way to motivate physical activity.

What they saw in their UVic lab has implications for a demographic far wider than 20-something males. Rhodes envisions the video game bikes as a way to encourage those of all ages and genders to become active. Further, interactive bikes can be an antidote to the routine and boredom that often dissuade people from continuing in traditional exercise programs.

“It’s a useful tool to get

people active,” Rhodes says.

In the first study, Rhodes measured attitude toward exercise among the inactive young males. He then divided them into two groups — one using a video game bike and the other cycling to self-selected music. After six weeks, the game cyclists were 30 per cent more likely to stick to an exercise program.

Many on the interactive bike were so focused on the

game they were unaware of how hard or how long they were exercising, Rhodes says.

In the second study, researchers measured the exertion of seven men and seven women on both interactive and stationary bikes. The study showed that video game cycling has higher metabolic demands than stationary cycling. Further, Rhodes says interactive cycling burns

between 25 and 60 per cent more calories over a 30-minute period.

The interactive bike has a role for even those who regularly exercise outdoors.

“I see this as a potential rainy-day activity,” he says.

Rhodes and Warburton’s next study involves taking the interactive bikes out of the lab and into busy households to measure the impact on exercise.

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