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BC Walks: The Use of Mass Media and Community Programming to Promote Walking

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The objective of this study was to increase the number of people who meet the recommended standard for moderate-intensity physical activity through walking and to assess the use of mass media and community programming to increase walking awareness and behaviors in individuals. The goal was to have 10,000 people pledge to start walking 10 minutes a day, working up to 30 minutes a day.

BC Walks media campaign, public relations, and public health activities were conducted in Broome County, NY, during May and June 2003. Broome County's total population is 200,500.

BC Walks promoted walking among the residents of Broome County through a mass media campaign including television, radio, cable, and print. Additional programming included walking events such as "Walk With a Doc" and a walk with a county executive downtown at lunchtime. Preprinted prescription pads for walking were given out by health care providers to their patients. A speakers' bureau was developed to provide speakers for service groups, a program that reached more than 1000 people with the *BC Walks* message. Additionally, a Web

site was developed for individuals to log their minutes and see the latest activities of *BC Walks*. Worksite challenges using pedometers as incentives were conducted in 30 businesses representing more than 4000 employees. Five schools introduced programs that encouraged walking among students, staff, and parents. Community programs on walkable communities were conducted in 4 local municipalities.

During the 2-month program, 10,800 people signed pledge cards to start walking 30 minutes a day. This mass media and community program demonstrated an increase in the number of people who pledged to meet the recommended standard for moderate physical activity.

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