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## What's in an Attitude Towards Regular Exercise?

In my "Message from the Editor" in the last issue of the *AMAA Journal*, I introduced the new "Exercise Is Medicine™" program of the American College of Sports Medicine. Its vision is to "make physical activity and exercise a standard part of a disease prevention and treatment medical paradigm in the United States." There are many social factors that can help ACSM, all of us in sports medicine, and the allied health and wellness professions in working towards achieving the goal of making physical activity a part of the life of every American. And heaven knows, we all know how much such a change in our national consciousness and collective behavior is needed for individual health and the health of the population as a whole. It's also one factor that could help to bring under control the seemingly never-ending march of higher and higher costs in the health care delivery system.

Many sectors of our society and economy have a role to play in "getting us going" in more senses than one. A very important element of the ACSM approach to regular exercise is that it offers a minimum weekly exercise program for individual health promotion. (To view the program, go to [www.acsm.org](http://www.acsm.org) and click on "Physical Activity Guidelines from ACSM and AHA" [American Heart Association].) There are no distinctions drawn between the types of exercise, showing that there are many different strokes for many different folks. The ACSM recommendation recognizes that no one form of exercise is any better than another, as long as it

works for the person who is doing it. ACSM also recognizes that while there are desirable minimums for health promotion, something is better than nothing.

All that said, last winter, the sporting goods manufacturer Pearl Izumi kicked off a major print advertising campaign for its running shoes on the theme that "No Virginia, there is 'good' exercise and 'bad' exercise and one foot sport is somehow better, nobler, or more real than another." (I saw the campaign in *Runners World*.) "We are not joggers," they proclaim. "Runners are wild. Joggers are runners who have been domesticated. If you're not sure whether you are running or jogging, go faster" (see <http://www.wearenotjoggers.com/home>). Wow! I wonder what they think of fast walking for exercise. Sure enough, unlike other major manufacturers of running shoes like Asics, New Balance, and Nike, they don't make walking shoes.

So what's the difference between running and jogging in Pearl Izumi's eyes? "Joggers are prey. Runners are hunters. If it feels like something you would do on a treadmill or at the helm of a tricked-out baby stroller, you're probably jogging. If it feels like something that might make other people nervous, you're running." I hope that no one who is trying to get going as a regular exerciser in a foot sport sees any of these messages. They are simply not helpful. They also show no understanding of what running or jogging or walking fast enough to raise your heart rate is really all about. As the late, great George Sheehan more accurately stated, "The difference between running and jogging is a race entry blank."

So let's talk about racing, shall we? I

wonder what Pearl Izumi would think of someone who finishes the last 10 miles of a marathon at 14 minutes per, instead of doing a 5K in 21 minutes? Or of someone who completes the last nine miles of the marathon at the end of an Ironman triathlon at 20 minutes per? Or of someone who is doing the 10K at the end of the Age-Group Triathlon World Championships held in June, 2008, at Vancouver, BC, Canada, at that same 14 minutes-per-mile pace, but finishing nevertheless and having a great time doing so? I would like to know because I was in all three spots.

When we are concerned about helping people become regular exercisers through foot-sports—running or walking fast enough to raise the heart rate significantly—the Pearl Izumi ethic certainly doesn't help. After all, the difference between running and walking is simply that in the latter, one foot is always on the ground. Are you somehow not worthy if you fast walk or "jog" (whatever that is)? In regular exercise, the right sport for *you* is the sport that's *right* for you. Whatever gets you going and keeps you going is the one to do.

What we want to do is vastly expand the market for all kinds of exercise equipment, for a lot of people who likely won't be going very fast. I don't think Pearl Izumi will get very much of it with the attitude they display in these ads.

Respectfully yours,  
Steven Jonas