**Bad Science or No Science: 10,000 steps.**

How many of you have a watch or a Fitbit or some other tracking device and find yourself hooked on checking your steps every day? Go ahead and raise your hands! It’s become quite the phenomenon this last decade. Based on what science? The home-grown science that proves any steps are better than none? True scientific research, out of major universities around the world, that have proven time and time again that 10,000 steps is the ticket to perfect health and fitness?

Yesterday, I found an article from The Guardian, written by David Cox on September 3, 2018 entitled “Watch your step: why the 10,000 daily goal is built on bad science.”

According to this article the 10,000 number is completely arbitrary, which originated from a successful Japanese marketing campaign in the mid-60s. The campaign was an attempt to capitalize on the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, the company Yamasa designed the world’s first wearable step-counter called manpo-kei, which translates as “10,000-step meter”.

Professor David Bassett, head of kinesiology, recreation and sport studies at the University of Tennessee says that there wasn’t really any evidence for it at the time. “They just felt that was a number that was indicative of an active lifestyle and it should be healthy.”

Research out of Kyushu University of Health and Welfare studied the potential benefits of taking those 10,000 steps and concluded that the average Japanese person took between 3,500 and 5,000 steps a day and if they were to increase their daily steps to 10,000 they could decrease their risk of coronary artery disease. I could have come to that same deduction with my home-grown research.

Is there scientific evidence to back up this number? According to Mike Brannen, national leader for physical activity at Public Health England says that there isn’t.

“Indeed, most of the scientific studies that have been conducted to try to test whether 10,000 steps a day is optimal for health are themselves arbitrary. They simply compare people who have done 10,000 steps a day with those who have done far lower numbers, such as 3, 000 or 5,000, and then measure calories burned, blood pressure and blood glucose levels.”

Another professor from the Center for Personalized Health Monitoring at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Catrine Tudor-Locke says, “This number keeps being reinforced because of the way research studies are designed. The study might find that 10,000 steps help you lose more weight than 5,000 steps and then the media reports it as you should always use 10,000 steps, but that could be because the study has only tested the two numbers. It didn’t test 8,000 or 12,000 steps.”

She also says that “at the same time, there seems to be an obsession about 10,000 and how many steps are enough, yet it’s more important, from a public health point of view, to get people off their couches. The question we should be asking is: how many steps are too few.”

Other studies suggest that somewhere between 6 – 8,000 steps could be the lower boundary for the best health benefits.

“Six thousand steps and above is getting you into the range of what these studies are showing as protective against cardiovascular disease, in particular,” Bassett says.

Scientists have attempted to calculate an exact number of steps to equate to the public health guidelines of 30-minutes of moderate exercise per day and suggests the minimum of 7,500 steps. They are also currently conducting studies to see whether 15,000 or even 18,000 might be better for us.

One of the problems with the 10,000-steps-a-day goal is that it doesn’t account for intensity in the exercise. Getting out of breath and increasing your heart rate may be more important than the total number of steps.

In June of this year, Tudor-Locke published some of the first findings in a paper titled ‘How fast is fast enough?’ The early research suggests that a minimum of 100 steps per minute is required for exercise to be beneficial. “This is the kind of pace which you naturally ascend to when you’re doing purposeful walking,” she says.

The bottom line is to get off the couch and to move on a regular basis! No science is needed to prove that that’ll make a difference.