



RESEARCH TO  
PRACTICE 2018

27-29 MARCH 2018  
BRISBANE, QUEENSLAND

## DATA: WE HAVE IT, WE NEED IT, BUT WE NEED IT TO BE BETTER

**Dr Natasha Schranz**

Before embarking on any health intervention, program or advocacy message it is important we know the full extent of the problem before diving in and working out what the best plan and solutions are. On the international stage Australia is considered to be one of the best performers with regards to physical activity research outputs, so this would suggest that we know exactly what the problems are and what we need to do about them. But surprisingly, this is not the case!

The 2016 Active Healthy Kids Australia Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Young People sourced data from 7 national- and 13 state-based datasets in order to assign grades to 12 physical activity indicators. This list was not exhaustive (i.e., did not include all regional and local level data) but it did represent the best quality research available to provide a national snapshot of kid's physical activity and benchmark Australia against the rest of the world. However, the synthesised data does highlight the numerous inconsistencies between and within datasets for any given indicator. For example, overall physical activity was assessed differently across the datasets and yielded varying findings. Depending on the dataset, estimates of meeting physical activity guidelines ranged from as low as 19% to as high as 39% for 5 – 17 year olds, and six different methodologies were used to assess physical activity across the datasets. In some cases, physical activity was not even defined (e.g. MVPA).

Beyond the Report Card, a recent audit on children's physical activity research in Australia has identified in excess of 150 datasets that contain a wealth of information but further highlights the continued practice of researchers to use incommensurable measures that may not provide the best representative data. We also know that in addition to inconsistencies within the data that has been and is being collected, there are huge gaps in the evidence as well. Specifically, representative and quality data for physical activity behaviours such as active play or non-organised/recreational activity and the actual time spent active during the school day (for children) are lacking. These gaps need to be filled if we want to have impact on activity levels across the whole 24 hour day.

And so while there is no denying that as a nation we are spoilt with regards to the wealth of physical activity research being conducted at any given time which has definitely allowed us to understand a great deal about the problems and most effective solutions. But, pushing for commensurate and quality measures across the board for all physical activity domains at the national, state, regional and local level is so important if we want to paint a harmonised picture that helps us to really make a difference and change the culture of a typically inactive nation.

**Abstract number:** 017  
**Session:** Why Can't We Get People Physically Active?  
**Date:** Tuesday, 27 March 2018  
**Time:** 1:30pm – 3:00pm  
**Co-Presenters:** Prof Stuart Biddle; Dr Natasha Schranz; Prof Jo Salmon  
**Panel Practitioner:** Ms Rachelle Foreman  
**Session Chairperson:** Dr David Dunstan