

Determining the Physiological Health Benefits of Leisure Travel

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Key Participating Units: Department of RPTS, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
Department of Environmental Health, School of Public Health

Anticipated Request Amount: \$100,000

Executive Summary of the Intended Proposal:

The act of traveling has benefits to the individual well-beyond taking them from one place to another. Most people who travel for leisure will admit that travel experiences are refreshing, and can reduce the stress they feel from the normal, day to day lives. Yet, many people refuse to use their vacation time, costing them the opportunity to gain a multitude of benefits, while decreasing the chances for world economies to receive tourism expenditures. While many studies have shown that people's perceptions of the amount of stress they feel, and/or how healthy they feel is improved after completing a vacation, there is little to no research that has examined actual physiological changes due to taking a vacation. If the travel industry can show true benefits of traveling it could be prescribed much like red wine and dark chocolate are now, as previously thought about decadences, that now provide benefit. With most world economies, and multiple attractions, destinations and cities all desiring travelers to use vacation time, there is great potential for research in this area to be awarded grant monies.

The primary researchers for this study will be Dr. James Petrick and his Tourism Marketing Lab in the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences, and Ranjana Mehto and her NeuroErgonomics Lab in the Department of Environmental Health. Multiple other researchers on campus will be interested in the equipment that will be requested in this proposal.

In order to aid in the understanding of actual health benefits of travel, and to give Texas A&M researchers the upper hand in procuring future research in this area, we are requesting funding for 25 Equivital™ physiological health monitors. These monitors allow one to continuously assess vital signs, give activity and energy expenditure data, track sleep and biorhythmicity and monitor themoregularity. The monitors, which cost approximately \$4,000 a piece, can be worn by subjects with only nominal inconveniences and can be used for a multitude of types of research including, but not limited to: clinical research, military training research, sports research, protection for industrial workers and pharma innovation and clinical trials.

The primary anticipated outcome from this study is that physiological benefits will be discovered, which will inevitably be utilized to show the benefits and importance of travel. These outcomes will then be used to apply for larger grants from federal agencies (i.e., the National Institute of Health, United States Travel Association and other national tourism agencies) and grants from various tourism providers (destinations, attractions, etc.) to more fully determine what benefits exist, and to determine best practices for how travel can be used to benefit individuals and companies.

Additionally, these monitors can be used for a plethora of studies across the Texas A&M campus. These monitors are extremely innovative and have been shown by recent studies to be a valid and reliable means for collecting physiological data across a multitude of applications. Thus, the purchase of these monitors would give Texas A&M researchers comparative advantage when pursuing external grants from numerous disciplines, and for attracting researchers wishing to work in these areas.