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Intense exercise 'better' than regular workouts

LONDON: People who complain they have no time to exercise may soon need another excuse.

Some experts are saying that intense exercise sessions can help people squeeze an entire week's workout into less than an hour.

Intense exercise regimens, or interval training, were originally developed for Olympic athletes and thought to be too strenuous for ordinary people.

But in recent years, studies in older people and those with health problems have suggested that many more people might be able to handle interval training.

If true, that could save millions of people hours in the gym every week. It is also a smarter way to exercise, experts said.

"High-intensity interval training is twice as effective as normal exercise," said Mr Jan Helgerud, an exercise expert at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology.

Intense interval training means working very hard for a few minutes, with rest periods in between sets. Experts have mostly tested people running or biking, but other sports like rowing or swimming should also work.

"You should be a little out of breath, but you shouldn't have the obvious feeling of exhaustion," Mr Helgerud said.

"I'm much more afraid of people not exercising at all," he said. "Inactivity is what's killing us."

Research has shown that compared with people on a normal exercise routine, those doing interval training can double their endurance, improve their oxygen use and strength by more than 10 per cent, and their speed by at least 5 per cent.

Even though interval training takes only a few minutes, its effects last for hours.

"You've exercised at such a high intensity that you're going to create a massive disturbance in your muscles," said Mr Stephen Bailey, a sports sciences expert at the University of Exeter.

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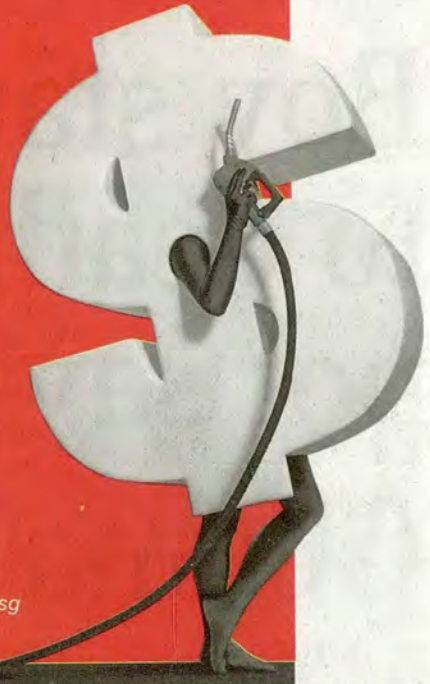
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Sickening neglect

- Patients were left in agony, screaming for pain relief.
- Their requests for toilet assistance were routinely ignored.
- They were left in soiled sheets and sitting on commodes for hours, often feeling frightened and ashamed.
- Patients left unwashed at times for up to a month.
- Families forced to clean toilets and public areas themselves.
- Inappropriate food given to patients. Food and drinks left out of their reach.
- Receptionists decided which casualty arrivals should be seen first, based on a "gut feeling" of who looked the most unwell.

SOURCE: GUARDIAN/TELEGRAPH

PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO

Appalling care at British hospital of horrors

Hundreds died as patients neglected and abused amid culture of fear and bullying

LONDON: It is one of Britain's worst hospital scandals.

A government inquiry into the working of a National Health Service (NHS) hospital found that patients were routinely neglected or left "sobbing and humiliated" by staff who stopped providing safe care as managers were preoccupied with meeting targets and cutting costs.

Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust, where at least 400 to 1,200 patients died in a three-year period because of appalling care, had lost sight of its responsibility, the inquiry report released on Wednesday stated.

Its chairman Robert Francis QC made 18 recommendations for both the Trust and the government after hearing evidence from more

than 900 patients and their relatives, and more than 80 staff, The Times of London reported.

"This was an appalling failure at every level of the hospital to ensure patients received the care and compassion they deserved," said British Health Secretary Andy Burnham.

"There can be no excuses for this. I am accepting all of the recommendations in full."

Staff shortages at Stafford Hospital meant that patients went unwashed for weeks, were left without food or drink, were unable to get to the lavatory or were left in a state of undress in full view of others, the report found.

Some lay in soiled sheets that relatives had to take home to wash, while others developed infections or had falls, occasionally fatal.

Many staff did their best but the attitude of some nurses "left a lot to be desired", the report said, describing the suffering caused to patients as "unimaginable".

Managers were "in denial" about the problems and were concentrating on cutting costs and hitting targets to achieve foundation trust status, the report said.

There was said to be a culture of fear and bullying, with staff concerned they would lose their jobs if targets were not hit, the

Telegraph reported.

Mr Francis found that of the 22 board members at the Trust during the period under investigation, most were either paid off or walked into other jobs, with many going on to senior, well-paid positions elsewhere in the NHS.

"It is absolutely disgusting and a total scandal that no senior managers have been disciplined over the appalling standards of care patients suffered at this trust," said Patients Association director Katherine Murphy.

An undisclosed number of doctors and at least one nurse are being investigated. The board that presided over the scandal had been replaced.

But families of those who died or suffered poor care branded the inquiry a "whitewash" and repeated calls for a full public investigation.

Ms Julie Bailey, who founded the victims' campaign group Cure the NHS after her mother died at Stafford Hospital, said that the handling of the scandal was disgraceful and unacceptable.

"It is time that the public were told the truth about the very large number of excess deaths in NHS care and the very large number of avoidable but deadly errors that occur every day."