Introduction

It is recommended that children aged 5 to 17 years should accumulate at least 60 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity (MVPA) daily. However, there is limited empirical evidence on how much physical activity Ghanaian children and youth engage in. Although the Ghana Education Service requires at least 80 minutes per week of physical education in schools, in practice, this is often not achieved. When children and youth fail to achieve the minimum recommended physical activity levels, they are at risk of adverse health consequences. The purpose of this short paper is to summarize the results of the 2018 Report Card (Figure 1).

Methods

Experts from various sectors related to physical activity were identified and formed the Ghana Report Card Working Group that gathered data and information. A combination of manual literature search, document review, and systematic evidence gathering for relevant information spanning 2016 to 2018 was conducted. Grades were based on the best available evidence. Sources included policy guidelines, peer-reviewed published literature, and gray literature including reports of government and nongovernment institutions.

The data were aggregated and consolidated following a harmonized process (Tremblay, et. al 2016). Grades (A = excellent, to F = failing) were assigned to each of ten common indicators using a standardized grading rubric. The ten common indicators were: Overall Physical Activity, Organized Sport and Physical Activity Participation, Active Play, Active Transportation, Sedentary Behaviours, Physical Fitness, Family and Peers, School, Community and Environment, and Government. Experts in the working group appraised the available evidence, discussed discrepancies, and reached consensus, before awarding a grade for each indicator. Assigned grades and justifications were submitted, and audited by the scientific sub-committee of the Active Healthy Kids Global Alliance (www.activehealthykids.org).

Results and Discussion

While all 10 indicators were assigned a grade in the 2018 Ghana Active Healthy Kids Report Card, research gaps, policy and monitoring issues remain to be addressed to better inform the grades. A more robust assessment, for example, keepfit club membership statistics, would assist in providing a more complete picture of the physical fitness of children and youth in Ghana. At present, many keepfit clubs abound in the country but without an objective monitoring or surveillance system. Grades and justifications for all 10 indicators are shown in Table 1.

Conclusion

Expert observations reveal that the proportion of Ghanaian children who achieve the World Health Organization recommended amount of physical activity is low. The mandate of the Ghana Education Service of at least 80 minutes per week of physical education in schools must be enforced, monitored and schools held accountable for compliance. Due to the associated health consequences, particularly in adulthood, a more coordinated strategic approach to monitoring and policy implementation is required.
physical activity promotion is necessary to increase physical activity levels for better health.

References


