

health club

management

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Calorie-powered membership

Holmes Place Portugal has forged a partnership with the Portuguese Cardiology Foundation to raise the issue of inactivity among the national population. **Ray Algar** reports

Month of the heart' is how Portugal uses May to encourage its citizens to embed just a little more activity into their everyday lives.

Like many Europeans, the Portuguese are failing to move enough – a European

Commission study from 2014 reported that more than six in 10 adults never exercise or take part in sport, ranking the Portuguese 27 from 29 countries. By comparison, Sweden topped the table with fewer than one in 10 never active.

Holmes Place – which operates 19 clubs and studios in Portugal – recognised an opportunity to join the national inactivity debate by partnering with the Portuguese Cardiology Foundation. The charitable foundation exists to reduce the incidence of cardiovascular disease, which accounts for three in 10 of all deaths in Portugal. The Foundation believes small lifestyle changes can nudge people towards a healthier future by reducing their risk of heart disease and stroke.

MOVEMENT AGAINST INACTIVITY

During May 2016, the two organisations created the campaign 'Movement against a sedentary lifestyle'. The core idea was to develop a mechanism for those already active to help others who were not.

IN A NUTSHELL

Project by: **Holmes Place, Portugal**

Web: **www.holmesplace.pt**

Charities supported: **Portuguese Cardiology Foundation**

Project status: **Ended**

Impact: **Portugal**

Gymtopia keywords: **Health and wellbeing, medical research**



Members could 'donate' their activity calories

For this one-month period, all Portuguese citizens – along with Holmes Place members – were able to 'donate' their activity calories to support the Foundation's work. Calories burned were converted into complimentary club memberships, which were gifted to the Portuguese Cardiology Foundation.

One million activity calories was worth one six-month Holmes Place membership.

People were invited to log any physical activity that raised their heart rate, from walking the dog to taking part in a group class. Calories expended during a Holmes Place class were automatically captured using data for an average participant, while other activity away from clubs could be logged by posting a photo on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter using the hashtag #darcalorias (givecalories).

An activity picture posted on social media using #darcalorias was worth 150 calories, unless your fitness tracker could confirm the precise energy expenditure. So for reference, my recent treadmill session would have contributed 322 calories to the cause (pride prevents me from disclosing how many minutes that was). All activity calories over the 31-day period were then aggregated into the campaign's dedicated website.

Using an online questionnaire and medical referrals, the Foundation then identified sedentary individuals who would benefit from free access to a Holmes Place club and support from staff.

CALORIES FOR MEMBERSHIP

An extensive communication campaign was run outdoors, in magazines, radio, social media and across Holmes Place's closed circuit TV platform. Videos featuring Jorge Corrolla and Mariana Monteiro, two well-known Portuguese actors, were also created to kick-start the project – viewed 123,000 times at time of writing.

Mid-way through May, 30 million calories had been logged on the microsite, rising to 60.2 million by the



The calories exchanged in the charitable initiative were turned into 60 Holmes Place memberships

end of the month. Had this just been me and the treadmill, that would have equated to almost 187,000 sessions – or viewed another way, the recommended calorie intake for a woman for 82 years.

Those calories have now been exchanged for 60 memberships, which I hope are now helping sedentary people realise that a life imbued with just a little physical activity can be joyful and enriching.

I can also see from some of the postings on social media that people really connected with the idea and had fun participating in the challenge.

Sérgio Marques, marketing and sales director of Holmes Place Portugal told me: "People from all over Portugal, from north to south, participated and donated calories. They feel really proud to be able to help other people."

MOVING FROM CAMPAIGN TO CAUSE

This project is reminiscent of the Zumba 'Great Calorie Drive' from 2013, when a 750-calorie class was exchanged for a one-meal donation to the World Food Programme. During that three-month initiative, a total of 82 million calories were recorded, funding more than 109,000 meals for the programme.

However, that project fell short of its ambitious target – of 2.6 billion calories – because it was complicated for Zumba participants to donate their class calories.

Making it simple, and then simpler still, is one golden rule worth remembering when getting involved in mass participation projects like this. So automatically capturing class calories, for example, was an intelligent part of this Holmes Place project.

As you read this story, I want you to think about whether projects like this can help clarify the purpose and mission of your organisation. The everyday

mission of Holmes Place is 'inspiring people to live well' – notice it says people, not members.

So when the country came calling, saying: 'We have an inactivity crisis, can you help and support us?', Holmes Place Portugal was able to reflect and say: 'This fits and moves us – we're in.'

My hope is that it isn't just for the month of May. So go find a cause that your organisation cares passionately about – and then when you have, and later have remarkable results that leave your team brimming with pride, let's share it with the world. ●

GYMTOPIA – A PLACE WHERE CLUBS DO SOCIAL GOOD



Gymtopia was conceived by founder and chief engagement officer Ray Algar (left), who believes that the global health and fitness industry has enormous influence and potential to be a force for good in the world, reaching beyond its immediate customers.

The idea of Gymtopia is simple: to curate and spread remarkable stories in which the fitness industry uses its influence to reach out and support an external community in need.

It was created with the generous support of five organisations: Companhia Athletica, Gantner Technologies, Les Mills, Retention Management and The Gym Group. Gymtopia received an Outstanding Achievement Award in the UKactive Matrix Flame Awards 2014.

Submit your own project to be considered for a future article at: www.Gymtopia.org

gymtopia