The GOALS Study:
The association between physical activity, cognitive performance, and academic achievement in adolescents

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Background (I)
Physical activity has a positive effect on cognitive performance in older adults

Background (II)
Adolescents as a group did not get much attention
Therefore: high importance to investigate factors which may stimulate optimal brain development in adolescents

Background (III)
Physical activity is positively associated with cognitive performance in adults
Little research has been done in adolescents
Brain of adolescents is still in development
Thus: the association between physical activity and cognitive performance is important and interesting to investigate.

Previous studies in adolescents (I)
Spanish adolescents, aged 13-18 years
Sport participation during leisure time is associated with better cognitive performance

Previous studies in adolescents (II)
Active commuting to school and its duration may positively influence cognitive performance in girls
Previous studies in adolescents (III)

- Swedish adolescents, aged 15-16 years
- Vigorous physical activity is positively associated with academic achievement in girls

Limitations previous research

- Not all studies measured physical activity objectively
- None of these studies include both cognitive performance and academic achievement
- No inclusion of other interesting variables (sleep duration, computer gaming and television viewing)
- Lack of other relevant outcomes (mood, self-esteem)
- No longitudinal perspective

Research questions

What is the effect of:
- Physical activity
- Commuting to school
- Sleep duration
- Computer gaming and television viewing

On:
- Cognitive performance
- Academic achievement
- Mood
- Self-esteem

Methods

- Longitudinal observational study
- 500 students, aged 12-17 years
- Universitary prepatory education level
- Secondary schools in Zuid-Limburg

Procedures

- Follow-up 1 year: Repeating week 1 and 2

Independent variables

- Physical activity
  - Objective (accelerometer)
  - Subjective (self-reported)
- Sleep duration
- Computer gaming
- Television viewing
**Dependent variables**

- Cognitive performance
- Academic achievement
  - Dutch, English, Mathematics
- Mood
  - CES-D self-report scale
- Self-esteem
  - Rosenberg self-esteem scale

**Covariates**

- Body Mass Index
- Alcohol consumption
- Smoking
- Socioeconomic status
- Pubertal phase
- Aerobic fitness

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Thank you for your attention!