



Mobile Apps



Unified Platform



Workflow Automation



HIPAA Compliant Messaging



Performance Analytics

Read Label, Eat Crisps, Exercise for a Bit...Maybe?

The United Kingdom is contemplating an innovative yet surprisingly simple update to food and drink labels in an effort to fight obesity. PACE, short for Physical Activity Calorie Equivalent, would join the current nutrition facts, and provide a bit of information on what the person could “trade” in exchange for consuming a serving of that particular item. UK citizens may soon be able to find out how many minutes it would take on the treadmill to burn off their favorite sweet or bag of crisps, and they wouldn’t even need an app on their phone to look it up.



The exercise information would be in the form of a symbol, and the theory is PACE labels would allow shoppers to make more informed - and hopefully healthier – choices; and this would lead to less obesity in the UK. There are strong opinions on either side of the suggestion offering their thoughts on why the PACE idea is good and bad.

One organization in support of the augmented labels is The Royal Society of Public Health. Viewing them as an easy method for sharing food and drink product information, the RSPH and others in favor see the exercise recommendations extended to menus in dining establishments and the shelving in shops and supermarkets. Their expectation is consumers will make healthier choices when buying these items to eat and drink, and it seems a meta-analysis looking at over a dozen previous studies on PACE labeling shows this is the case. Amanda Daley of the UK’s Loughborough University led this review of previous research, and she and her team noted the group of research subjects who had access to PACE information did indeed make lower calorie choices and even ingested fewer calories overall, both comparatively speaking to those participating in the study’s no-PACE group. Sounds like a great, successful idea...at least in the more controlled environment of a research study.

Dietician Liz Brown, weighing in on the idea from Texas, stated, “Including PACE on food labels encourages disordered eating behavior and leaves out the fact that our bodies are not labs.” As the information on minutes of exercise is based on a 175-pound male, researcher Daley believes they should be taken as an approximation, and points out caloric nutritional

information is really just an estimate itself. Speaking of calories, PACE labels still wouldn't provide information as to whether or not the drink or food inside the package is actually healthy, quality fuel for the body – only how much exercise to burn off the serving size calories.

Other detractors point out that calorie expenditures during workouts between an adult and child are vastly different, healthcare has moved away from weight being the most important determinant of health, constantly and obsessively checking PACE labels may prove detrimental for those with a tendency toward disordered eating (including undue judgment from others and guilt over consumed foods), and Daley's meta-analysis was not taken to current with feedback from the participants in those previous studies her group took data from.

Perhaps Washington Dietician Rebecca Scritchfield has the best approach to PACE and food labels in general: "For lasting well-being, public-health programs should help improve access to a variety of healthy foods and educate on healthy preparation methods. Programs should encourage people to exercise for its inherent value, not to burn off food that helped nourish the person who ate it. The best public-health programs will support the community, people of all sizes, with inspiring and helpful tools for self-care while increasing joy and decreasing shame."

