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NEW STUDY REVEALS RUNNING MAY BE SOCIALLY CONTAGIOUS

UCY Lecturer Christos Nicolaides one of the team's researchers

A research study published recently in *Nature Communications* (8, 14753; 2017) has shown that exercise, specifically running is socially contagious.

UCY Lecturer of Department of Business and Public Administration Christos Nicolaides teamed up with another colleague of his expertise (Management Information Systems) MIT Professor of Sloan School of Management Sinan Aral to conduct the interesting social network analysis.

As the researchers describe in their paper, they recorded the daily exercise patterns, geographical locations, and social-network ties of more than 1 million people, who between them ran more than 350 million kms over 5 years. Studying the results - that apply only to people who already are runners - they have found that runners do influence one another. Over all, if one person ran for about 10 minutes more than usual on any given day, that runner's friends would lengthen their workout by approximately three minutes, even if the weather was discouraging.

In aggregate, according to the researchers, these results indicate that "running can be socially contagious." The impacts "go beyond correlation to causation," they say. "In general, if you run more, it is likely that you can cause your friends to run more." Even though the findings cannot tell us whether other types of exercise are equally catching or how to make exercise in general more contagious among inactive people, they do mean that our friends, who post their workouts online, may not just be showing off, but subtly trying to get us to join in. For those who want to boost their exercise game, the researchers recommend sharing your workout results with friends who exercise, even if you're not exercising together.

The fascinating findings of the research paper initially published in *Nature Communications*, have also appeared in articles published in *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *NBC News*, *New York Magazine* and *Science Magazine*.