

# Remembering Steven N. Blair, PED (1939-2023)



In October, the physical activity scientific community was devastated to learn Dr. Steven N. Blair had passed away. He was a pioneer in defining the health benefits of physical fitness and physical activity, particularly with respect to cardiometabolic diseases. He was a Distinguished Professor Emeritus in the Department of Exercise Science and Epidemiology and Biostatistics in the University of South Carolina's Arnold School of Public Health. He previously worked at the Dallas, Texas-based Cooper Institute, where he was president and CEO from 2002 to 2006. A 2005 New York Times article described Blair as "one of the nation's leading experts on the health benefits of exercise."



Dr. Steven N. Blair

Dr. Blair is credited with providing the scientific evidence for spreading the message that any exercise is better than none. Many of us remember one of his seminal publications on physical fitness and mortality, with a figure that clearly demonstrated the benefits of "getting out of the bottom category" (Blair et al., JAMA 1989) (Figure 1).

Dr. Blair's awards include the **American Heart Association's Population Science Research Prize**, awarded in 2008; the President's Council on Sports, Fitness, and Nutrition Lifetime Achievement Award; the Bloomberg Manulife Prize from McGill University, among many others. He was a fellow of the American Epidemiological Society, the American Heart Association, the American College of Sports Medicine, the National Academy of Kinesiology, the Society of Behavioral Medicine and the Obesity Society. He served as president of the American College of Sports Medicine, the American Academy of Kinesiology and Physical Education, and the National Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity.

Notwithstanding Dr. Blair's nearly 1,200 scientific publications, his true legacy are the students and colleagues he mentored throughout his career. To name a few, Leanna Ross, PhD (chair, Early Career Committee) and myself were mentored by Steve. **The Steven N. Blair Award for Excellence in Physical Activity Research**, awarded during the EPI|Lifestyle Spring Meeting, recognizes the most highly meritorious abstract in the field, stimulates excellence in physical activity research and provides evidence of his dedication to mentoring future scholars. He will be missed ■

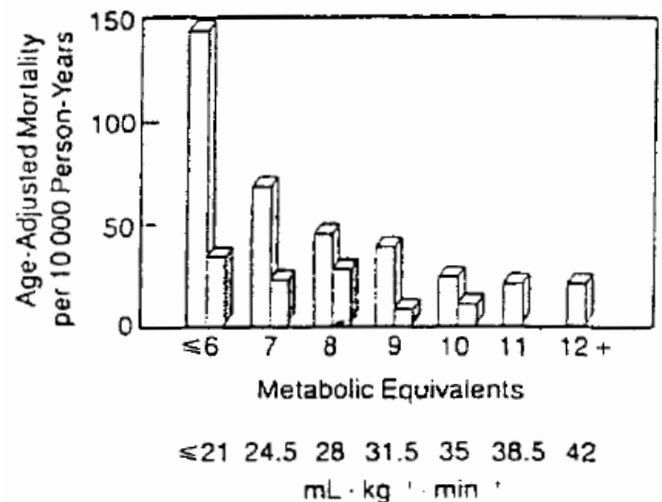


Figure 1—Age-adjusted, all-cause mortality rates per 10,000 person-years of follow-up by physical fitness categories in 3120 women and 10 224 men in the Aerobics Center Longitudinal Study. Physical fitness categories are expressed here as maximal metabolic equivalents (work metabolic rate/resting metabolic rate) achieved during the maximal treadmill exercise test. One metabolic equivalent equals 3.5 mL · kg<sup>-1</sup> · min<sup>-1</sup>. The estimated maximal oxygen uptake for each category is shown also.