

Options and strategies to enhance individual operational readiness: A German research perspective

Alexander Witzki^a, Kristina Küper^a, Dieter Leyk^a

Purpose

Operational readiness of individual soldiers is increasingly affected negatively by declining physical fitness and adoption of unhealthy lifestyle habits. The development of new individualized strategies is necessary to boost and support motivation for and adoption of health and fitness oriented behavior. Given the key role of physical performance capability for operational readiness, the goal of these strategies should be enhancement and maintenance of individual physical performance capabilities. This area has been a focus of attention both in the military ranks as well as among military scientists in Germany.

Purpose of this presentation is to present a birds-eye view on the issue at large as well as approaches and options from a German perspective.

Methods

A selective literature search was conducted with a thematic focus on interventions targeted at improving health, fitness, well-being, resilience, and behavior beneficial for health, physical performance, and operational readiness. Special attention was given to examples of incentive systems, independent of setting (work, leisure time, at home, public or private sector etc.).

Results

There is an abundance of intervention programs and incentive systems intended to influence individual health

and fitness related behavior. Rough estimates of their efficiency indicate that both positive and negative incentives can affect participation and adherence to health and performance oriented behavior-modifying programs.

Conclusion and Operational Relevance

The results suggest that transfer of this empirical knowledge into the Bundeswehr may offer further and promising options for the improvement of individual physical fitness, resilience, and healthy behavior of soldiers. For example, nudging and incentives may constitute appropriate measures to further enhance and boost results of existing health and fitness promotion campaigns. However, it is equally important for military policy makers to recognize that empowering soldiers to maintain and enhance their individual operational readiness by ways of adequate educating and training is an effective way to maximize military effectiveness.

Operational Relevance

The enhancement of individual soldiers operational readiness is of utmost operational relevance. The approaches and data presented indicate viable options to achieve this goal.

For the authors

Dr. Alexander Witzki

Bundeswehr Institute for Preventive Medicine
Division A -Health and Performance Promotion-
Andernacher Str. 100, D-56070 Koblenz

E-Mail: Alexander1Witzki@bundeswehr.org

Oral presentation at the ICSSP 2020 in Quebec, Canada (11 to 14 February 2020)

^a Bundeswehr Institute for Preventive Medicine

MILITARY TRAINING

Basic training and sustainment training are not sufficient!

→ additional tools are required

