

INDUSTRY WATCH

Canadian Off-Highway Vehicle Distributors Council (COHV)

By Jo-Anne Farquhar

Study Confirms Recreational Off-Road Riding Good For the Body and Soul

The results are in! It's been confirmed, all-terrain vehicle (ATV) and off-road motorcycle (ORM) riding is good for your body and soul.

The York University, Health Benefits study concluded that “based on the measured metabolic demands, evidence of muscular strength requirements and the calorie burning expenditures associated with off-road vehicle (ORV) riding, this form of activity conforms to the recommended physical activity guidelines of both Health Canada and the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) and can be effective for achieving beneficial changes in health and fitness.”

Generally speaking, according to Jamie Burr and his York University team, ORV riding is similar in aerobic demand to many other recreational, self-paced, sporting activities such as golf, rock climbing and alpine skiing.

In July 2007, the Canadian Off-Highway Vehicle Distributors Council (COHV) and its partners, the All-Terrain Quad Council of Canada (AQCC), the Motorcyclist Confederation of Canada (MCC) and the Government of Nova Scotia commissioned, through York University, a ground breaking, first ever comprehensive probe of the fitness and health benefits of all-terrain vehicle (ATV) and off-road motorcycle (ORM) recreational riding.

Jamie F. Burr, Veronica K. Jamnik, Jim A. Shaw and Professor Norman Gledhill at York University's Physical Activity and Chronic Disease Unit, Faculty of Health agreed to conduct the study and for Jamie Burr, a kinesiologist and exercise physiologist at York, the research would be part of his PHD. The purpose of the research -- to characterize the physiological demands of recreational ORV riding under typical riding conditions using habitual recreation off-road vehicle riders.

Following three years of research, the July 2010 issue of *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*, the official Journal of the ACSM, published the “Physiological Demands of Off-Road Vehicle Riding”. This publication presents the results of one of the four phases of the study. This phase focused specifically on the physical demands of ORV riding, compared them to the demands of other recreational activities and explored the health and fitness effects that ORV participation has on Canadians.

Prior to the actual hands on involvement of riders, a national survey was completed by 310 off-road riders from across Canada. The results of this survey, were used to identify habitual (regular user) ride characteristics and physically demanding tasks/experiences associated with riding off-highway vehicles (motorcycle and ATV).

The next phase involved 128 habitual ORV recreation riders, male and female, 16 years of age and older. Riders were first familiarized with the trail for safety reasons. All riders used their own riding gear and vehicles to avoid the necessity of having to adjust to new equipment. Riders wore specially designed helmets and equipment that allowed researchers to monitor and measure the physical demands of off-road riding (heart rate, oxygen consumption, muscular involvement (fatigue), and rate of exertion).

Oxygen consumption, which is an indicator of physical work, increased by 3.5 and 6 times the resting values for ATV and ORM riding respectively. According to the ACSM these results fall within moderate intensity activity guidelines and are in line with Canadian physical activity recommendations.

The duration of a typical ride (2-3 hours for ATV, 1-2 hours for ORM) and the frequency of the rides (1-2 times a week) create sufficient opportunity to stimulate changes in aerobic fitness which again, falls within the physical activity guidelines. What does this mean? It means what ATV and ORM riders have been saying all along, being outdoors, riding the trails is ... let's say it again... good for your body and soul.

With health and exercise being top of mind for most families and for the health care system in Canada, COHV and its partners believe that the results of this study are important for ATV and ORM recreational riders, proving that being out on the trails is not only fun but contributes to individual and family well-being and physical fitness.

There is still more to come. As they are published, COHV looks forward to reviewing subsequent sections of the study that will further assess the fitness and health characteristics (body composition, musculoskeletal fitness, aerobic fitness, back fitness, physical activity participation, lifestyle characteristics, health characteristics and quality of life characteristics) of this same representative sample of participants.

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