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The BMJ Press Release

“Game on for Pokémon Go,” says The BMJ pundit

Game on for Pokémon Go, The BMJ’s weekly GP columnist says today in a light-hearted look.

As she and her children hunt Pikachu monsters in their native Glasgow, Dr Margaret McCartney describes the streets as having become a “reclaimed playground in which to have interconnected fun.”

“Increased physical activity is a tantalising side effect,” she hopes.

A deluge of recent media headlines prompted McCartney to consider whether playing the game might be good or bad for you -- despite a lack of science to help.

Pokemon Go is not marketed as a health app, she notes, and players are not motivated by wanting to get healthy. But still they end up doing a lot of walking.

Without any robust evidence, other commentators have attempted to link playing Pokemon Go to helping in depression; solving the obesity epidemic (one UK player walked 225 km and lost 2 stone); and easing the type 2 diabetes burden (based on previous research on walking and standing), she writes.

Over in the bad-for-you camp are anecdotes of Pokémon hunters being rescued by emergency services from the sea and caves.

And McCartney mentions reports that teenagers in London were robbed of their phones at gunpoint, and players have been involved in real shoot-outs in the United States.

Meanwhile, the UK National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children has published a parents' guide, she writes.

Playing should be made as safe as possible, but like most things, Pokemon Go comes with a mix of benefit and risk, McCartney says.

In our modern online lives “we all need real life connectivity, and the net can facilitate that,” she writes. Folk in her local park “who I wouldn't have talked to otherwise” have been giving her tips.

“We never hear about the things that didn't happen: the heart attacks prevented through more exercise, or the vitamin D deficiency that geeks have avoided, blinking in the sunlight while catching a Pikachu monster,” she opines.

“The possibilities for apps to make the streets an active, reclaimed playground in which to have interconnected fun are boundless. Increased physical activity is a tantalising side effect. Game on,” she concludes.

[Ends]

Notes to Editors:

Observations: Game on for Pokémon Go

<http://www.bmj.com/content/354/bmj.i4306>

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