

It Is Instructive To Project Our Statistics

WITH AHMAD DANIELS

THE QUALITY LIFE



Ahmad

gination with this arresting paragraph:

"We seem to become immune to horrendous events when they are commonplace. From this perspective, it is instructive to project our statistics concerning premature death and disability from heart attacks and strokes onto a more dramatic screen. Let us say that beginning January 1, two jumbo jets crash every day of the year, killing 501 people everyday (359 men, 142 women). The average age is 58, with an age range from 30 to 65. At the end of the year, the total number of premature deaths from these airplane accidents is 183,000. In addition, another four jumbo jets crash daily, extensively injuring 1,562 people per crash; after six months' of inten-

sive medical care, these crash victims are restored to only one-half of their pre-accident health and mobility. These non-fatal crashes involve a total of 570,000 persons by the end of the year. The total cost in lost earnings is \$40 billion."

Farguhar writes, "The costs in the plan crash analogy are the actual estimated annual lost earnings and medical expenses of heart disease and stroke patients in the under 65 age group alone."

Research has shown that exercise, including running, can go a long way toward lowering the incidence of heart attacks and strokes. Since 1950 the death rate from cardiovascular disease has declined by one-third, a particularly striking trend in view of the long upward march be-

fore that. When I talked recently with Dr. Ralph S. Paffenbarger Jr., the epidemiologist, he told me he thought the increasing amounts of time Americans are devoting to exercise was partly responsible. Paffenbarger, himself a marathon runner who has competed all over the world, predicts, on the basis of what he has witnessed, that the trend will continue.

But will exercise by itself be enough to enhance health as much as it might be enhanced? Almost certainly not. Exercise, it is true, can help us lose weight, feel better, and have more efficient hearts and lungs. But no matter how diligently pursued, exercise can't do everything. Running, or for that matter any other exercise, is only a beginning

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