

IN SEARCH OF FITNESS IN

LIMA by Ann Gerhardt, MD *Subscribe to DrG'sMediSense at www.drgsmadisense.com (07/2006)*

When I asked where I could safely go for a jog, I was told The Golf in San Isidro. No one calls it a golf *course*, just The Golf.

Finding The Golf, a course stuck smack dab in the middle of a residential area of Lima, is not easy, since it is surrounded by a high stone wall and dense vegetation. I doubt that many people use the Golf: Security guards make sure that only club patrons have access. Ubiquitous security guards, with guns and bullet proof vests make sure that few people have access to any official, financial or up-scale place in Lima.

Most people walk as part of their daily life – to the bus, in the street as vendors, to the store, in the farm. Most don't do it for 'aerobic' exercise, and most (especially Cusco at 11,000 feet elevation) don't move very fast.

In upscale Mira Flores, a glitzy section of Lima that outdazzles Los Angeles, fitness centers enable people who prefer to avoid being hit by cars to stay in shape. Judging from the rising incidence of obesity in Peru, it looks like not too many people can afford to use them.

It seems that purposeful striding, in the ongoing game of street chicken, is the most common way to stay fit. The beach would be nice to stroll (Lima is on the Pacific coast), but is separated from the city by a freeway and much of it is privately owned. Clearly, cycling on the streets is out of the question, unless one has a death wish.

I walked around the Golf a few times, then attempted to explore the neighborhoods of San Isidro. If it weren't for intersections and three close encounters with on-coming cars, I might have achieved aerobic threshold.

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