Abstract

Exercise Physiology emerged from so-called work physiology and industrial hygiene as the physiological demands of manual labor and their economic consequences were considered during the later 1800s. At the same time social movements focused on improving working conditions for laborers emerged. In the early part of the 20th century work physiologists became increasingly interested in human performance including the study of elite athletes. During the second half of the 20th century the negative health consequences of inactivity emerged via epidemiological studies leading to an intellectual marriage between exercise physiology and epidemiology. In the early 21st century many of these trends continue and have been amplified by concerns about aging individuals and populations along with a global pandemic of obesity. As the 21st century continues the role of exercise, physical activity and the study of exercise physiology will be critical to address these challenges in both an individual and societal context.