



No evidence of effectiveness of community-wide interventions for increasing physical activity

Clinical question

How effective are community-wide, multi-strategic interventions in increasing physical activity?

Bottom line

The body of evidence in this review did not support the hypothesis that multi-component, community-wide interventions effectively increased population levels of physical activity. Almost all of the interventions included a component of building partnerships with local governments or non-government organisations. Many also employed some form of individual counselling by health professionals, mass media, or other forms of communication. Unfortunately, the most intense interventions failed to demonstrate consistent improvements. Further, effectiveness was not demonstrated in the long-term studies, which some shorter studies had recommended. There was also no evidence that adherence to a particular theoretical framework or model was advantageous.

Caveat

There was a noticeable inconsistency in the findings of the numerous available studies, and this was confounded by serious methodological issues (selection, detection and publication biases). In particular, the tools used to measure physical activity were generally weak, inhibiting the ability to interpret the results and draw conclusions.

Context

Insufficient physical activity leads to poorer health. Regular physical activity can reduce the risk of chronic disease and improve health and wellbeing. Multi-strategic, community-wide interventions for physical activity are increasingly popular, but their ability to achieve population-level improvements is unknown.

Cochrane Systematic Review

Baker PRA et al. Community wide interventions for increasing physical activity. Cochrane Reviews, 2011, Issue 4. Article No. CD008366. DOI:10.1002/14651858.CD008366.pub2.

This review contains 25 studies involving over 7 million participants.

PEARLS No. 314, June 2011, written by Brian R McAvoy

PEARLS are succinct summaries of Cochrane Systematic Reviews for primary care practitioners – developed by the Cochrane Primary Care Field, New Zealand Branch of the Australasian Cochrane Centre at the Department of General Practice and Primary Health Care, University of Auckland and funded by the New Zealand Guidelines Group. New Zealanders can access the Cochrane Library free via www.nzgg.org.nz

PEARLS provide guidance on whether a treatment is effective or ineffective. PEARLS are prepared as an educational resource and do not replace clinician judgement in the management of individual cases. View PEARLS online at: www.nzdoctor.co.nz; www.nzgg.org.nz; www.cochraneprimarycare.org



THE COCHRANE
COLLABORATION®



New Zealand
GUIDELINES GROUP
Te Rōpū Rarangi Tohutohu
Promoting Effective Health and Disability Services