

Health promotion interventions in adolescents with physical disabilities

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SHARING OUR WORK

- Knowledge Connections presentation: Meaningful Participation at Holland Bloorview December 2015
- Canadian Therapeutic Recreation Association (CTRA) Conference presentation June 2016
- Manuscript to be submitted to Disability and Rehabilitation Journal

WHAT WAS THIS STUDY ABOUT?

Adolescence is a time of growth and development, but youth often develop poor eating habits and become less active during this time. This includes adolescents with disabilities, but unfortunately they are often excluded from programs aimed at promoting healthy lifestyles in adolescents ('health promotion programs'). Our study wanted to find out how to develop a health promotion program specifically for adolescents with disabilities, by looking at studies that had already been conducted and finding out what other people across Canada are currently doing.

WHAT DID WE DO?

The study consisted of two activities:

Activity 1: We updated a literature review on health promotion programs for children with disabilities and selected the information specifically aimed at adolescents.

Activity 2: We sent a Canada-wide online survey to children's treatment centres and community organizations offering programs to youth with disabilities. The survey was completed by clinicians, managers and community service providers. We asked for information about any health promotion programs designed for adolescents with physical disabilities and opinions on effective program features.

The findings from both activities were combined so that we could identify the important things to think about when developing a health promotion program for adolescents with physical disabilities.

IMPACT FOR CLIENTS, FAMILIES AND CLINICAL PRACTICE

This work forms the foundation for developing evidence-informed program, a core value in our services within Participation and Inclusion.

Specifically, this project will be used for the development of an adolescent-focused program that will address service gaps and opportunities, and may be used by organizations that are currently or have the potential to offer inclusive health promotion programs to youth with physical disabilities.

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

The following components considered to be important for health promotion programs for adolescents with physical disabilities were:

- Hands-on, real-world learning (with an emphasis on physical activity participation)
- Individualized approaches tailored to meet needs of each participant
- Employing experts to help 'coach' young people
- Social benefits and motivators could help to engage young people but were not usually focused on within health promotion interventions

Other findings of significance included:

- Most studies took place in clinical settings and lacked community application
- While recognized as a valuable strategy by clinicians, youth were rarely involved in the development of health promotion programs

NEXT STEPS?

Client and family engagement will guide a Phase 2 of this project as we design a health promotion program for and by adolescents with physical disabilities. Using the expertise and guidance of stakeholders including youth, parents, researchers, clinicians and community service providers, we will develop and host a series of adolescent focus groups and parent focus groups. The focus groups will allow for further exploration and application of the program components identified in Phase 1, and help us develop an evidence-informed health promotion program for adolescents with physical disabilities.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS STUDY, PLEASE CONTACT:

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WHO ARE WE?

This project team included a therapeutic recreation specialist, youth facilitator, youth leader and researchers at Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital and the Bloorview Research Institute.

THANK YOU!

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