

Paper: Results of the First Year of Active for Life: Translation of 2 Evidence-Based Physical Activity Programs for Older Adults Into Community Settings.

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There is widespread consensus among health promotion researchers that it is important that health promotion interventions are not only efficacious, but also generalisable to the community and transferable to other contexts. With the growing evidence base for effective strategies in promoting physical activity, there have been calls for greater application and evaluation of evidence-based physical activity interventions in non-research and community settings; that is, translating research into practice and determining the effectiveness and public health impact.

In this pre-post design study, Wilcox and colleagues evaluated the effects of 2 evidence-based physical activity interventions on self-reported physical activity and other related outcomes in adults aged 50 years and older. Two evidence-based programs, Active Choices (AC; a 6-month, telephone-based program) and Active Living Every Day (ALED; a 20-week, group-based program), were selected for translation and evaluation in several community settings as part of the Active for Life project. Both programs were underpinned by behaviour-change theory and both had been tested in multiple settings with a variety of participants.

The results indicated that both AC and ALED significantly increased moderate and vigorous physical activity, and total physical activity when analyses were carried out using the complete data set and by intention-to-treat. Furthermore, the effect sizes found in the community settings were comparable to those seen in the randomised controlled trials on which they were based. These findings suggest that evidence-based physical activity programs can be successfully translated from the research setting into community settings with diverse populations, and with outcomes similar to those found in controlled research contexts.

Wilcox and colleagues have demonstrated that clinically efficacious programs can be implemented in the general community setting with positive results. This study highlights the importance of selecting interventions with sound theoretical grounding and thorough evaluation in the research setting for implementation in the broader community. This study also shows the value of collaborating with community partners with demonstrated experience in the recruitment of diverse samples of participants and participation in large-scale program implementation and evaluation.

There were some limitations, including the reliance on self-report data, differences between respondents and non-respondents, and a lack of follow up to measure the maintenance of behaviour changes. Also, the authors noted that this study involved community partners who were relatively large, experienced and well-resourced. It is not clear whether smaller community organisations with fewer resources and less expertise would demonstrate a similar impact implementing the same evidence-based interventions. Furthermore, it is not clear from the present article what contextual factors may have helped to explain the successful translation from efficacious to effective evidence in the Active for Life programs. It would be worthwhile to attend to future publications on this project for more information regarding recruitment, intervention moderators, process evaluation and sustainability. According to the authors, these papers are in development.

In order to promote physical activity and increase participation at the community level, it is important that practitioners and decision-makers have access to information demonstrating how to effectively translate and implement efficacious interventions, which have been developed in controlled research settings, in more general and diverse settings. The current study presents a good example of evidence translation. The authors have indicated a need for future research to continue to examine the translation of evidence-based interventions into community settings. This would include evaluating the process, impact, reach and maintenance of programs, as well as forming intersectoral collaborations and implementing programs in a variety of community settings.