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Title

Can the power of sport help men with overweight/obesity improve their health through a tailored healthy lifestyle program?

Priority 1 (Research Category)

Men's health

Presenters

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Abstract

Context: In Canada and the U.S., a greater proportion of men (vs. women) have overweight or obesity. Despite this, men are underrepresented in weight loss research and fewer are recruited into weight loss services. Objective: To determine whether participants who received an innovative gender-sensitized healthy lifestyle program (Hockey Fans in Training: Hockey FIT) would have greater weight loss and reduced waist circumference (WC), after 3 and 12 months, compared with a wait-list control group. Study Design and Analysis: Cluster randomized controlled trial whereby 42 sites were randomly assigned to either the intervention (i.e., Hockey FIT) or a wait-list control group (i.e., usual activities for 12 months). Analyses were conducted using linear mixed effects models for cluster design and repeated measures. Setting: Sites in Canada and the U.S. were selected based on availability/interest of both a local major junior/professional hockey team and a community implementation partner (e.g., YMCA). Population Studied: Men aged 35-65 years with a body mass index (BMI) ≥ 27 kg/m², recruited primarily through the hockey team's social media and email communications. Intervention: Hockey FIT is an off-ice, group-based program, designed to appeal to hockey fans through support from their local team and is grounded in men's preferences (e.g., competition, humour). During the 3-month active phase, participants attended 12 weekly, 90-minute sessions incorporating both education and exercise, and led by certified coaches. During the 9-month minimally-supported phase, participants were encouraged to sustain their health behaviour changes. Outcome Measures: In-person assessments were completed at baseline, 3 and 12 months, and included measurements of weight, height, and WC. Results: Participants (n=997) averaged 48.6 years of age (± 8.3 SD) and had mean baseline BMI values of 35.3 kg/m² (± 6.1). By 3 months, participants in the Hockey FIT group lost 2.50 kg more (95% CI -3.36 to -1.64, $p < 0.0001$) than the wait-list control group, and by 12 months this difference between groups remained (-1.61 kg, 95% CI: -2.55 to -0.67, $p = 0.001$). Similarly, Hockey FIT led to greater WC reduction at both 3 and 12 months, compared with the wait-list control group. Conclusions: A gender-sensitized healthy lifestyle

program for men, using the power of sport as an engagement strategy, had a positive impact on both short and long-term weight-related outcomes.