

Development and implementation of *Heart Team*: a Facebook support group for cardiac patients

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Abstract

Improving adherence to cardiac rehabilitation programs should reduce the risk of repeat cardiac events and improve quality of life. We present the process of developing and piloting a Facebook support group, *Heart Team*, which other cardiac health professionals could adapt and trial at their hospital, rehabilitation or community service.

Ethical Approval

The Human Research Ethics Committee at South Eastern Sydney Local Health District approved this study (approval number: 17/204 (HREC/17/POWH/418)), and all participants provided written informed consent. Funding to conduct this trial was obtained by a Cardiovascular Disease Research Network Project Grant by the Australia Heart Foundation.

Introduction

Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death and hospital admissions in Australia, with significant contributions from repeat coronary heart disease (CHD) events.¹ Secondary prevention initiatives, such as cardiac rehabilitation (CR) programs which target risk factor reduction, have been proven to reduce the risk of repeat CHD events by at least 80%.^{2,3} However, patient uptake of CR programs is suboptimal with participation rates ranging between 15-30%.⁴ Barriers to participation include long distances to services, employment commitments, and carer duties.⁴ New strategies using contemporary communication technologies are a potential way to address these barriers and improve access.

Facebook is one of the top social networking sites for older adults who use the Internet.⁵ Previous research in cardiac inpatients (n=285) demonstrated that 80% used smartphones/tablets, and 28% are regular social media users.⁶ This group accessed information on health (65%), medications (56%), heart disease and treatments (43%) and communicated with health professionals (30%). Facebook is therefore a promising modality to investigate given its potential to support prevention and health promotion activities, influence patient outcomes, improve efficiencies and overcome barriers to accessing secondary prevention.

Of all its features, Facebook groups best exemplify its potential as a support resource for CHD secondary management. Facebook groups allow virtual communities of people to exchange information, perspectives, and provide support.⁷ The moderation and oversight of Facebook groups for secondary prevention of CHD by multidisciplinary cardiac health professionals, including dietitians, nurses, exercise physiologist, psychologists, and cardiologists, may encourage social interactions and behavior change in a safe and private environment.⁸ However, the use of Facebook support groups for CHD secondary management is untested, and its potential not fully realised.⁹ In 2017, we conducted formative research to determine participant characteristics, perceptions, acceptability, and usage patterns when participating in the *Heart Team* Facebook support group and to track engagement and interaction among the participants and with nominated group champions.

Development of the *Heart Team* Facebook group

Our formative research with cardiac patients (n=18) using Facebook demonstrated receptiveness to Facebook-based contact with cardiac health professionals to improve their health.¹⁰ Key preferences included a closed group, expert cardiac health professional moderation, focus on cardiac health information and group guidelines. Proficient Facebook users from this study also volunteered to support others as group champions by providing posts and comments in the proposed group.

Subsequently, the *Heart Team* Facebook closed group was developed as an adjunct to traditional CR services (**Figure 1**). The *Heart Team* Facebook group provided information and a forum for discussion on general heart health, physical activity, healthy eating, weight management, cardio-protective medication adherence, smoking cessation, psychological well-being, and encouraging attendance at CR.



Figure 1. Heart Team Banner Photo

Our multidisciplinary team developed a bank of short posts for the moderator to use based on behavior change techniques¹¹ relevant to heart disease and consistent with national guidelines (**Figure 2 and Appendix**).^{3,12} To promote engagement and provide social support, moderator posts included photos, web link-outs and guided stories, which have been shown to be effective in patients with CHD.¹³ A dietitian (SRP), with expertise in lifestyle behavioral counseling, moderated the group and posted posts from the bank on weekdays from 8 AM to 6 PM. All moderator posts were at random times on weekdays to increase engagement. Two clinical nurse specialists (SD, RG) provided intermittent moderation. Champions (peers)

provided support and strategies to stimulate motivation to participants and were supplied with an information guide for reference (see Appendix). A group engagement policy was developed based on the existing health service Facebook policy for healthcare staff (see Appendix).¹⁴

Tis' the seasonings. I came across this article this morning. Tips for how we can boost the flavour of our cooking while cutting back on the salt. Has anyone tried any of these combinations?



Tis the Seasonings
Tis the Seasonings
[recipes.heart.org](https://www.heart.org/recipes)

Eating too much salt over time can increase our risk of high blood pressure which is a major risk factor for heart disease. For a healthy heart, it's important we do not eat too much salt. Check out ways to cut down on salt intake. What are your top tips to cut down on salt?

<https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/healthy-eating/food-and-nutrition/salt/ways-to-cut-down-on-salt>



Figure 2. Example Heart Team Facebook Posts

Implementation of the *Heart Team* Facebook group

We piloted the *Heart Team* Facebook group over a 7-week period from October 2017 to December 2017. In addition to the three moderators, *Heart Team* comprised of three champions and three participants. We identified champions from a previous research study (see above), who had expressed an interest in being involved in further research. Participants were recruited from a single CR service in Sydney, Australia. At the time of the study, all champions had completed CR at the same service, and all participants were currently attending the same CR service. Before joining *Heart Team*, champions and participants completed an online survey asking questions about demographics and Facebook use and preferences. After participating in *Heart Team*, champions and participants completed an online survey and a brief telephone interview about their perceptions and acceptability of the group.

Implementation results of the *Heart Team* Facebook group

Participant characteristics

In addition to 3 champions, 3 patients were recruited to the *Heart Team* trial over the seven weeks. All *Heart Team* members had a median age of 70 years (range: 57-80) and with equal numbers of males and females. All members spoke English only, five of six were married, and five of six were employed part-time or retired. Members had varying education levels (secondary school to postgraduate level qualifications). Confirming our previous research, all champions and participants used Facebook to keep in touch with family and friends, accessed Facebook at home in the morning or evening on a laptop or tablet, and all disliked sharing too much information about themselves. All members reported spending a median of 27 minutes per day on Facebook (range: 15-90 minutes per day).

Participation perceptions, acceptability and usage patterns

Over the 7-week period, there were 78 posts to the *Heart Team* group, including 67 by moderators, three by champions and eight by participants. On average, all posts were seen by 8 out of 9 *Heart Team* members, liked two times and received two comments (range: 0-11). Five of the six participants and champions agreed the group feature was easy to use, viewed *Heart Team* often, felt confident participating in *Heart Team*, felt supported by the moderators and were overall satisfied with *Heart Team*. All agreed the moderator posts were easy to understand and would recommend *Heart Team* to other cardiac patients. Posts on general heart health were rated the most useful. All members agreed *Heart Team* encouraged them to attend CR. Through the post-implementation telephone interviews found champions and participants both thought *Heart Team* was not interactive (*'There wasn't very much interaction from members,'* champion; *'I would have liked to hear from more [people],'* participant).

Future research and uses

Despite the benefits of in-person CR services, less than two-thirds of eligible patients attend existing services.⁴ Evidence-based electronic health programs can provide CHD patients with access to a modified CR service. Our preliminary research shows potential for Facebook as a health service delivery tool. However, to

evaluate the impact of Facebook support groups on cardiac health behaviors and attendance at in-person CR services we encourage further investigations with larger sample sizes, and including patients who do not or inconsistently attend in-person CR.

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Appendices

Educational Resource: *Heart Team* engagement policy and moderator post library

Educational Resource: *Heart Team* how to be a champion guide

Educational Resource: Heart Team engagement policy and moderator post library

Heart Team description (publicly available):

Heart Team is a healthy lifestyle Facebook group for people who have been recently diagnosed with coronary heart disease. Heart Team is a part of a research study is being conducted by researchers and clinicians from The University of Sydney and St. George Hospital in the South Eastern Sydney Local Health District. It has been developed to provide you with lifestyle information and a forum for discussion on general heart health, physical activity, healthy eating, medication adherence, smoking cessation and encouraging attendance at cardiac rehabilitation. It is important to remember this Facebook group is not intended to replace the care provided to you by your medical professional or existing services, please continue to seek advice from your general practitioner and specialist and attend cardiac rehabilitation. If you are experiencing heart attack symptoms call Triple Zero (000) immediately and ask for an ambulance.

Heart team research group is led by researchers from The University of Sydney, Professor Robyn Gallagher, Professor Adrian Bauman, Associate Professor Philayrath Phongsavan, Professor Lis Neubeck, Dr Anne Grunseit, Dr Blythe O'Hara, Dr Becky Freeman, Dr Melody Ding, Dr Stephanie Partridge and research clinicians from St. George Hospital, Glenn Paull and Sarah Due.

This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at South Eastern Sydney Local Health District (approval number: HREC/17/POWH/418).

Safety post:

If you are experiencing heart attack symptoms call Triple Zero (000) immediately and ask for an ambulance.

This Facebook group is not intended to replace the care provided to you by your medical professional or existing services, please continue to seek advice from your general practitioner and specialist and attend cardiac rehabilitation.

If you have a change in your health status warranting presentation and/or admission to hospital, please let us know at your earliest convenience. [Image (media ID: safety 1)].

Heart Team pinned posts¹ (the following content will only visible to Heart Team group members):

Welcome to Heat Team!

Heart Team is moderated by myself, Stephanie Partridge (accredited practising dietitian and researcher from The University of Sydney) and my colleague, Sarah Due, a Clinical Nurse Specialist and Cardiac Rehabilitation Coordinator, who you know from St. George Hospital.

Heart Team has been developed by a team of experts to provide you with healthy lifestyle information to improve your heart health and prevent another heart event. We are available to answer questions and join in the conversation between 8am and 6pm Monday to Friday.

We encourage you to join the discussion as you improve your lifestyle, by sharing your own experiences and supporting your fellow group members. Please respect the privacy of your fellow group members and do not share any content outside of this group. While you are free to stop participating at any time or not to discuss anything you are not comfortable with, we should let you know that if you change your mind and want to leave the group, your comments cannot be deleted, as we won't be able to do that because it is a group.

Like any discussion forum, we have developed a community engagement policy to ensure this is a safe place for all group members. Please read the information below carefully, if you are unsure of anything, please do not hesitate to contact me using the contact details provided in the information sheet.

Community engagement policy:

The Heart Team Facebook group is an open discussion forum for all members and group member's comments and opinions are welcomed and encouraged. Group members are free to post their thoughts or feedback and exchange with one another. To make sure this group is a safe place for all group members, and for legal reasons, there are terms of use and some house rules that users are asked to follow.

We ask you to please respect the privacy of your fellow group members and do not to share or repeat posts or comments from others outside of the group. We expect that users will not post content that falls into the following categories and we reserve the right to remove postings that are:

- Offering inappropriate medical advice or eliciting medical advice from other group members
- Offensive, divisive, aggressive, abusive, defamatory or intolerant
- Fraudulent, deceptive, misleading or unlawful
- Trolling, deliberately derailing discussions or posting multiple versions of the same view to the forum
- Unrelated or off topic
- Violates the intellectual property right of another individual or entity
- Spamming in nature
- Commercial solicitation or solicitation of donations
- Uses obscene or offensive language

The views, opinions, and information expressed in user-generated comments remain with the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of South Eastern Sydney Local Health District or The University of Sydney or their staff. While user generated comments are not edited, to ensure a positive experience for members of this group and the broader community, we may report or remove at its discretion any content or comments containing spam, profanity, or otherwise objectionable or prohibited material. We encourage you to have open and honest discussions whilst being respectful of your fellow group members.

¹A pinned post is a status update that is manually selected to stay at the top of a group, meaning it will not slip down the group feed as moderators and participants continue to add other posts to the group.

Heart Team moderator post schedule:

The Heart Team moderator post schedule is shown in **Table 1**. Example message for each of the target behaviours are shown in **Table 2** to **Table 7**. The posts are based on behaviour change techniques. These include:

Behaviour health link: General information about health outcomes in relation to behaviour

Information on consequences: Information about the benefits and costs of action or inaction

Intention formation: Encourage person to decide to act or set a general goal or behavioural resolution

Table 1. Moderator post schedule for the Facebook group

Week/behaviour	Day	Behaviour change technique	Time ¹	Post ID
Week 0	M	Community engagement policy	8am-6pm	CEP 1
Existing content	T	Safety information	8am-6pm	SAFE 1
	W	Behaviour health link	8am-6pm	PRE 1
	W	Behaviour health link	8am-6pm	PRE 2
	T	Behaviour health link	8am-6pm	PRE 3
	T	Behaviour health link	8am-6pm	PRE 4
	F	Behaviour health link	8am-6pm	PRE 5
	F	Behaviour health link	8am-6pm	PRE 6
	F	Behaviour health link	8am-6pm	PRE 7
Week 1	M	Behaviour health link	8am-6pm	CVD 1
Behaviour: General heart health	T	Behaviour health link	8am-6pm	CVD 2
	W	Information on consequences	8am-6pm	CVD 3
	T	Information on consequences	8am-6pm	CVD 4
	F	Intention formation	8am-6pm	CVD 5
Week 2	M	Behaviour health link	8am-6pm	PA 1
Behaviour: Physical activity	T	Behaviour health link	8am-6pm	PA 2
	W	Information on consequences	8am-6pm	PA 3
	T	Information on consequences	8am-6pm	PA 4
	F	Intention formation	8am-6pm	PA 5
Week 3	M	Behaviour health link	8am-6pm	Diet 1
Healthy eating	T	Behaviour health link	8am-6pm	Diet 2
	W	Information on consequences	8am-6pm	Diet 3
	T	Information on consequences	8am-6pm	Diet 4
	F	Intention formation	8am-6pm	Diet 5
Week 4	M	Behaviour health link	8am-6pm	Wt 1
Behaviour: Weight management	T	Behaviour health link	8am-6pm	Wt 2
	W	Information on consequences	8am-6pm	Wt 3
	T	Information on consequences	8am-6pm	Wt 4
	F	Intention formation	8am-6pm	Wt 5
Week 5	M	Behaviour health link	8am-6pm	Sm 1
Behaviour: Smoking	T	Behaviour health link	8am-6pm	Sm 2
	W	Information on consequences	8am-6pm	Sm 3
	T	Information on consequences	8am-6pm	Sm 4
	F	Intention formation	8am-6pm	Sm 5
Week 6	M	Behaviour health link	8am-6pm	Psych 1
Behaviour: Psychological wellbeing	T	Behaviour health link	8am-6pm	Psych 2
	W	Information on consequences	8am-6pm	Psych 3
	T	Information on consequences	8am-6pm	Psych 4
	F	Intention formation	8am-6pm	Psych 5

¹Times for posting will be randomly selected between 8am-6pm taking into account the individual content of the messages.

Table 2. Post ID, behaviour change techniques, and draft example messages for Facebook posts related to general heart health information including facts about CVD and information about medications and risk factors

ID	Behaviour change technique	Draft example message	Image or link out
CVD 1	Behaviour health link	Did you know taking our blood pressure and cholesterol medications can halve your risk of a heart attack? Check out more tips for taking your medicines from the National Heart Foundation. Share your tips below.	https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/your-heart/living-with-heart-disease/medicines Image (from link)
CVD 2	Behaviour health link	If you have had a heart attack, it is normal to be prescribed a number of medications. The medications you are prescribed help reduce your risk of future heart problems and manage your symptoms. Remember to take your medications as prescribed by your doctor. Like if you remembered to take your medications today.	Did you remember to take your medications today? Image (media ID: CVD 2)
CVD 3	Information on consequences	Make time for cardiac rehab. Did you know cardiac rehab will help you return to an active and satisfying life, and helps to prevent another cardiac event or a new cardiovascular condition? Let us know if you attended cardiac rehab this week.	https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/your-heart/living-with-heart-disease/what-is-cardiac-rehabilitation Image (from link)
CVD 4	Information on consequences	There is no single cause for heart disease, but there are lifestyle changes we can make to decrease our chance of future events. These include remembering to take our heart medications, quitting smoking, being physically active, eating a healthy diet, managing our weight and looking after our mental wellbeing. Share with the group a lifestyle change you made this week.	https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/your-heart/know-your-risks/heart-attack-risk-factors Image (media ID: CVD 4)
CVD 5	Intention formation	'Appy Friday everyone! Check out this smartphone app tip: We know how hard it can be to remember to take your medications. If you're having trouble remembering to take your medications, try using The Heart Foundation's app "My Heart My Life" and set reminders on your phone.	https://myheartmylife.org.au/ Video (media ID: CVD 5)

Table 3. Post ID, behaviour change techniques, and draft example messages for Facebook posts related to physical activity

ID	Behaviour change technique	Draft example message	Image or link out
PA 1	Behaviour health link	Did you know, at any age, physical activity will provide a range of health benefits, including reducing your risk of a heart attack? For more information, check out...	https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/active-living/get-active Image (media ID: PA 1)
PA 2	Behaviour health link	Did you know regular moderate-intensity physical activity is a vital part of your return to everyday life? From the beginning increase your activity very gradually. Do everyday tasks, like sitting less, light gardening, housework or walking around the house. What activity do you plan to do or did you do today for your heart?	Image (media ID: PA 2)
PA 3	Information on consequences	There are many benefits of being active. Did you know, at any age, physical activity will give you more energy, help us manage our weight, help us improve your cholesterol, lower our blood pressure, make us feel more relaxed and help us sleep better?	https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/physical-activity-guidelines-for-older-adults Image (media ID: PA 3)
PA 4	Information on consequences	Get your family moving! Did you know making physical activity a priority for our families sets a positive example and it's a great way to spend quality time together? It's good for us, and it helps our family establish healthy habits. Share an active activity you did with family or friends this week.	https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/active-living/active-families Image (from link)
PA 5	Intention formation	Being more active is important to me because... Write down all the reasons why it's important for you to increase your physical activity levels. Share your top reasons in the comments below.	Image (media ID: PA 5)

Table 4. Post ID, behaviour change techniques, and draft example messages for Facebook posts related to healthy eating

ID	Behaviour change technique	Draft example message	Image or link out
Diet 1	Behaviour health link	Did you know what we eat and drink influences four of the major risk factors for heart disease: high cholesterol, high blood pressure, diabetes and being overweight? Check out the top heart-healthy eating tips from the Heart Foundation.	https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/healthy-eating/food-and-nutrition/heart-healthy-eating-tips (Image from link)
Diet 2	Behaviour health link	Did you know eating healthy foods will help you recover and reduce your risk of more heart problems? Check out how to start a healthy eating action plan today and share your goals with the group for support.	https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/after-my-heart-attack/heart-attack-recovery/action-plans/nutrition-action-plan Image (media ID: Diet 2)
Diet 3	Information on consequences	Eating too much salt over time can increase our risk of high blood pressure which is a major risk factor for heart disease. For a healthy heart, it's important to not eat too much salt. Check out ways to cut down on salt intake. What are your top tips to cut down on salt?	https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/healthy-eating/food-and-nutrition/salt/ways-to-cut-down-on-salt Image (media ID: Diet 3)
Diet 4	Information on consequences	Did you know eating healthy doesn't mean dieting or giving up all the foods you love? A healthy diet including lots of colourful fruit and veg is part of the best healthy eating pattern. Aim to eat at least 5 serves of vegetables and 2 serves of fruit every day.	https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/healthy-eating/food-and-nutrition/fruit-and-vegetables Image (media ID: Diet 4)
Diet 5	Intention formation	Do you need help finding out what is in the food you're eating? The free app, FoodSwitch, can help us find out what is in the food we're eating and suggest simple, healthier switches for us and our families. Download it today (make sure you check out the SaltSwitch filter) and share your experience with the group.	http://www.bupa.com.au/health-and-wellness/tools-and-apps/mobile-apps/foodswitch-app Image (media ID: Diet 5)

Table 5. Post ID, behaviour change techniques, and draft example messages for Facebook posts related weight management

ID	Behaviour change technique	Draft example message	Image or link out
Wt 1	Behaviour health link	Did you know just 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity on most, if not all days of the week is great for our heart health and will help us achieve and maintain a healthy weight? Why not join Australia's largest FREE community-based walking network!	http://walking.heartfoundation.org.au/ Video (media ID: Wt 1)
Wt 2	Behaviour health link	Did you know Getting our portions right at breakfast, lunch and dinner can make a real difference to our weight and our health? Get the balance right when plating up meals at home with this guide.	http://healthyweightweek.com.au/portion-sizes/ Image (media ID: Wt 2)
Wt 3	Information on consequences	Remember, people come in all shapes and sizes, body weight is just one factor that can impact on our health and needs to be considered along with your overall health and wellbeing. Learn how to lose weight the healthy way here.	https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/images/uploads/publications/Losing-weight-the-healthy-way.pdf Image (media ID: Wt 3)
Wt 4	Information on consequences	The key to achieving and maintaining a healthy weight is healthy eating and physical activity every day. Make a list of things to help you lose weight. Include ways of having better eating habits, doing more physical activity and sitting less often. Share some (or all!) your list to give others ideas.	Image (media ID: Wt 4)
Wt 5	Intention formation	Remember it's much better to choose small goals and lose weight gradually than set a goal that seems unachievable. Even if we only ever lose a few kilograms it can make a big difference to our health, and it's better than continuing to gain weight. Set an action plan here...	https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/after-my-heart-attack/heart-attack-recovery/action-plans/healthy-weight-action-plan Image (media ID: Wt 5)

Table 6. Post ID, behaviour change techniques, and draft example messages for Facebook posts related to smoking

ID	Behaviour change technique	Draft example message	Image or link out
Sm 1	Behaviour health link	Did you know many people who die from smoking, die from heart and blood vessel disease and stroke? Quitting smoking is especially important for people who have been diagnosed with heart disease. Call the Quitline today on 13 78 48.	http://www.quit.org.au/preparing-to-quit/choosing-best-way-to-quit/quitline Image (media ID: Sm 1)
Sm 2	Behaviour health link	Did you know quitting smoking is especially important for people who have already been diagnosed with coronary heart disease? Call the Quitline today on 13 78 48.	https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/your-heart/know-your-risks/smoking Image (from link)
Sm 3	Information on consequences	Did you know quitting smoking makes it easier for us to be physically active and can help us live longer? Tell us other benefits you have experienced from quitting smoking.	http://www.quit.org.au/reasons-to-quit/health-benefits-of-quitting Image (media ID: Sm 3)
Sm 4	Information on consequences	For many people who are quitting smoking, when the initial feeling of achievement wears off, it can start getting a bit harder, and sometimes really hard. Stay focused – it will get easier! Check out a lot of useful tips for staying on track.	http://www.quitnow.gov.au/internet/quitnow/publishing.nsf/Content/coping-strategies (Sm 4)
Sm 5	Intention formation	Write down all the reasons why you want to quit smoking and keep the list where you will see it often – if that's in your smartphone, try an app!	http://www.quitnow.gov.au/internet/quitnow/publishing.nsf/Content/news_lp Image (media ID: Sm 5)

Table 7. Post ID, behaviour change techniques, and draft example messages for Facebook posts related to psychological wellbeing

ID	Behaviour change technique	Draft example message	Image or link out
Psych 1	Behaviour health link	Make the time for Cardiac Rehab. Did you know cardiac rehab will help you return to an active and satisfying life, and helps to prevent another cardiac event or new cardiovascular condition? Like if you attended cardiac rehab this week.	https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/your-heart/living-with-heart-disease/what-is-cardiac-rehabilitation Image (media ID: Psych 1)
Psych 2	Behaviour health link	Walk and Talk. Did you know being physically active every day is good for our mental wellbeing? Try walking and talking with your family and friends. Like this post if you went for a walk with family or friends this week.	Image (media ID: Psych 2)
Psych 3	Information on consequences	The more the merrier. Did you know joining a social group, such as a walking group or craft or hobby group is good for our mental wellbeing? Did you know the heart foundation has walking groups and events? Like if you are already a part of a social group or plan to join one.	Image (media ID: Psych 3)
Psych 4	Information on consequences	Remember to be kind to yourself. After a heart attack or other heart problem, it is normal to feel sad, angry, anxious, guilty, lonely, confused or stressed. You may have one or more of these feelings. They may last a few hours, days or a couple of weeks. Check out some tips from the Heart Foundation to help manage emotional stress. Note. We recommend that you talk with your doctor if these feelings last longer than two weeks.	https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/after-my-heart-attack/heart-attack-recovery/managing-your-emotional-and-social-life Image (media ID: Psych 4)
Psych 5	Intention formation	Did you make time for Cardiac Rehab this week? Remember to go to your cardiac rehabilitation program, to learn about your heart, risk factors, medications and lifestyle changes you need to make. Share your experiences from cardiac rehab with the group below.	https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/your-heart/living-with-heart-disease/what-is-cardiac-rehabilitation Image (media ID: Psych 5)



How to be a Heart Team champion guide

What is Heart Team?

Heart Team is a healthy lifestyle private Facebook group for people who have been recently diagnosed with coronary heart disease. Heart Team is part of a research study being conducted by researchers and clinicians from The University of Sydney. It has been developed to provide people recently diagnosed with coronary heart disease with lifestyle information and a forum for discussion on general heart health, physical activity, healthy eating, medication adherence, smoking cessation and encouraging attendance at cardiac rehabilitation.

Who are Heart Team champions?

Heart Team champions are people who have completed group based cardiac rehabilitation services. They are continuing their rehabilitation journey by maintaining and improving the lifestyle changes they made during cardiac rehabilitation. Heart Team champions provide support and motivation for new group members.

Why have I been invited to be a Heart Team champion?

You have been invited to be a Heart Team champion because you recently completed a group based cardiac rehabilitation at St George Hospital. You also participated in a previous research study and expressed interest in being involved in future research.

What does being a Champion involve?

Heart Team champions play an important role in the Heart Team Facebook group through proactively using Facebook to promote messages associated with heart health and to be responsive to the Facebook group participants. We encourage champions to:

- Check into the group regularly
- Engage with posts by commenting and generating discussion
- Start a conversation / thread by posting about your experiences

Will I be given support to be a Champion?

Yes, Heart Team champions will be provided with some examples of the kinds of posts that could be used to generate discussion and engagement. The rules of the group will also provide guidance on the kinds of posts that are going to be relevant to this group. However, being a Champion just requires you to be interested and engaged in the Facebook group to be proactive and responsive.

Frequently asked questions

Question: Should I comment on the moderators posts or post new things of my own?

Answer: Both! We encourage you to post new things that are important to you, as well as commenting on the moderator's posts.

Question: What things should I post about?

Answer: We encourage you to post about your own person experiences and realistic accounts of living with health disease, as these are the most useful for our group members. In the example posts on the next page, we have suggested ideas related to healthy heart habits.

Question: Should I post at a particular time?

Answer: No. Please post at any time you would like. Our moderators check into the group between 8am and 6pm Monday to Friday.

Question: How many times a week should I post?

Answer: We encourage you to post or comment 2-3 times per week (or more if you like), but do understand this is not always possible.

Question: How long should my posts be?

Answer: Posts around 5-6 lines are the easiest for group members to read and digest.

Question: What if my post is longer than 5-6 lines?

Answer: Try separating it into 2 smaller posts. It is ok from time to time to have longer posts.

Question: Should I include a photo with my post?

Answer: Yes, we encourage you to share photos with your posts. Photos are relatable for other group members.

Question: I saw an interesting link to an article about heart health, should I post it?

Answer: Sometimes articles can contain confusing information. It is always best to check articles with the moderator before you post it.



No longer want to be a champion?

Heart Team champions are able to stop being champions at any time, you can do so by letting the Group administrator know.




Examples posts

We know from our research, champions who post their personal experiences and realistic accounts of living with heart disease are the most useful parts of online groups, like Heart Team.

Healthy eating, physical activity, quitting smoking, looking after your mental wellbeing, and attending cardiac rehabilitation are all important habits for a healthy heart. In the table below, we have put together why these habits are important and examples of what you might like to post in the heart Team Facebook group. We encourage you to share any of your own experiences or tips.

Habits for a healthy heart	Why is this habit important?	Examples of what to post
<p>Healthy eating</p> 	<p>What we eat and drink is important for our heart health.</p> <p>A healthy diet of vegetables, legumes, beans, fruits, whole grains, oily fish, reduced fat dairy, and plant-based oils is important for a healthy heart.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have a favourite heart friendly recipe? Share it with the group, you can also include a photo if you like. • Are you a savvy supermarket shopper? Know how to choose heart friendly foods? Share your top tips with the group. • Do you know any easy ways to select heart friendly dishes when eating out at a café or restaurant? Share your top tips with the group. • Did you make any changes to your eating patterns after your heart event? Share your experience with the group and how you have sustained the changes.
<p>Physical activity</p> 	<p>Regular moderate-intensity physical activity is a vital part of our everyday life and important for our return to everyday life after a heart health event.</p> <p>We should aim for at 30 minutes of moderate intensity* physical activity on most if not all days of the week. We can do this in small bouts, such as three 10-minute walks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe your first experience exercising at cardiac rehab and your first time exercising at home. Ask if anyone in the group shares your experience or had a different experience. • Do you do any regular physical activity, like walking, light swimming, doubles tennis or golf? Share what you like about these activities and how you fit them into your day. • Do you do any incidental physical activity? Like walking to the shops, gardening, taking the stairs instead of the lift? These are all important activities that add up over the day. Share your tips with the group.

*Moderate-intensity activities are energetic activities that don't make you breathless, like brisk walking, cycling are enough to give us health benefits.

Habits for a healthy heart	Why is this habit important?	Examples of what to post
<p>Quitting smoking</p> 	<p>Stopping smoking is especially important for people who have had a heart health event.</p> <p>Stopping smoking will greatly reduce our risk of having another heart attack.</p> <p>Quitting smoking makes it easy to be physically active and helps us live longer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you an ex-smoker? How did you quit? What did you find the most challenging during this time? Share your quitting story with the group.
<p>Wellbeing</p> 	<p>It is normal for us to feel down or sad from time to time, especially after a heart health event.</p> <p>It is important we maintain our mental and social health during the recovery period, by monitoring ourselves for depression and seek help if needed.</p> <p>It is also important to monitor our levels of social support (friends and family) and reach out to them when needed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you relax? Do you paint, read, go for a walk, chat with friends or family? Share how you relax with the group. • Have you joined a social group, such as a walking, craft or hobby group? How did you find out about the group? What benefits have you experienced?
<p>Attending cardiac rehab</p> 	<p>We know attending cardiac rehab is safe and beneficial for people of all ages, leading to improved survival, improved wellbeing and reduces the chances of a second heart event.</p> <p>Cardiac rehab programs are designed to help us make practical, potentially lifesaving changes to the way we live.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell the group about the first time you went to cardiac rehab? How did you feel? What was the most challenging? What surprised you? • What was the best thing about cardiac rehab? • What changes did you make at cardiac rehab? What was the easiest change to make? What was the hardest?