

Moving Healthcare Professionals Programme: embedding the promotion of physical activity in healthcare curricula

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Title = Moving Healthcare Professionals Programme – embedding the promotion of physical activity in healthcare curricula

Presenters = Andrea Cameron, Ruth Shaw

Type of presentation = Issues for debate (in-person)

Theme = Key challenges in healthcare education

Promotional abstract (100 words)

The benefits of physical activity to health are widely extolled, particularly in relation to the prevention and management of disease. However, few undergraduate healthcare curricula make space to specifically teach physical activity promotion. The professional standards of accrediting bodies ensure that public health and health promotion are embedded in pre-registration degree programmes but there is no standardised approach to covering physical activity. The national Moving Healthcare Professionals Programme (MHPP) is designed to support UK healthcare professionals and educators to gain knowledge and skills that would enable physical activity to be included within routine care to facilitate better patient outcomes.

Key concepts to be addressed, including, where possible, the international relevance (maximum 100 words)

Tackling inactivity is central to the World Health Organization's Global Action Plan on Physical Activity 2018-2030 (GAPPA) with healthcare viewed as an important sector to progressing this agenda. The International Society for Physical Activity and Health (ISPAH) also identifies healthcare as one of eight key investment areas to support a systems-approach to physical activity promotion. Such an approach requires policies, programmes, partnerships and environments that support community engagement in physical activity to secure a sustainable and healthful future. This presentation will explore the challenges healthcare educators face when trying to integrate the promotion of physical activity in pre-registration curricula.

Aim(s)/focus (maximum 100 words)

This presentation will:-

1. Familiarise the audience with the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) and Sport England's programme of work to try and raise the visibility and quality of physical activity teaching for healthcare professionals
2. Share the recently formed MHPP taskforce's recommendations on priority areas for action
3. Share examples of where physical activity has been embedded in healthcare curricula and explore scalability
4. Debate whether embedding physical activity in healthcare curricula should be a priority and, if this agenda is to be advanced, who the key stakeholders would be and how to get them involved.

Evidence base and literature informing the arguments (maximum 200 words)

A lack of physical activity leads to preventable deaths and costs the UK nearly £7.5 billion annually, £1 billion of this being to the NHS (OHID, 2019). British healthcare professionals (of whom there are c.650,000) will, during their career, interact with almost half a million patients (OHID, 2019). As

trusted sources of advice this means many potential opportunities to promote the benefits of physical activity in preventing and managing chronic health conditions (ISPAH, 2020). If a quarter of the inactive population in England were given and responded to such advice it is thought that there would be nearly 3 million more active adults (Sport England, 2021). However, the majority of healthcare professionals feel ill-equipped in terms of knowledge and confidence, so consequently do not give their patients physical activity information (MHPP, 2020).

Initiatives like 'Moving Medicine' and 'Physical Activity Clinical Champions' demonstrate that progress can be made on upskilling the workforce (Brannan & Hughes-Short, 2020). However, without the impetus of specific professional standards to drive this agenda, progress on embedding physical activity in healthcare curricula will be slow and variable across institutions and programmes. This debate will examine whether there should be more strategic drivers to progress this agenda.

Issues for debate (maximum 100 words)

Healthcare systems, particularly in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, face challenges in service provision; a more physically active and healthy population would reduce strain on the sector. Healthcare professionals are viewed as influential and trusted providers of health messages and are therefore well-placed to promote the benefits of physical activity to their patients. However, they need the underpinning knowledge and skills and it can be challenging to find space within their undergraduate health promotion curriculum to cover this topic. This debate will focus on embedding physical activity in healthcare curricula, and how to resource this in a sustainable manner.

Three key points to indicate how your work contributes to knowledge development within the selected theme (maximum 100 words)

- Healthcare professionals support patients to make informed choices, including about healthful behaviours, yet currently few practitioners feel able to discuss physical activity because of a lack of coverage in their pre-registration programmes;
- Sharing best practice examples with impact, alongside heightening awareness of available learning resources, can enable educators to explore embedding physical activity in their own curricula and supports the GAPP objectives of increasing healthcare professionals' knowledge and skills related to physical activity promotion;
- Healthcare professionals have a key role in influencing and delivering national policies impacting public health, therefore physical activity needs to be addressed in their curricula.

References

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