

Health Promoting Practices project presents findings at IADR general meeting

Further to the article in the March edition of the Newsletter, Dr Hayes' presentation at the IADR General Meeting in San Francisco last month was well received.



In a patient-centred healthcare model, patients are being encouraged to take control of their own healthcare and participate in a collaborative relationship with their healthcare provider to ensure the best possible health outcomes. The purpose of the Health Promoting Practices project was to develop a voluntary health promotion framework through which health professionals could positively influence health behaviours of their patients.

Using convenience sampling, dental practitioners and physiotherapists participated in a state-wide survey exploring attitudes to health promotion. Eighteen practices were involved in implementing the framework, which included recruiting patients to complete a Health Self-Assessment, and comparing this with basic demographic factors and health attitudes. Process evaluation involved a 12 month follow-up survey to participating practitioners.

Dental practitioners (n=337) and physiotherapists (n=367) generally believed that it was part of their role to engage in health promotion with patients. Dental practitioners were strong on promoting healthy eating and smoking cessation, while physiotherapists almost always discussed physical activity with patients; however, neither group regularly discussed alcohol consumption with patients.

Practitioners identified insufficient consultation time as the biggest barrier to health promotion, followed by a lack of

remuneration, feeling that it would not change patient behaviour, and a lack of counselling skills.

The findings from the patient health self-assessment at baseline revealed that nearly 40% of participants reported a healthy diet, with just over half undertaking a healthy level of physical activity, more than 90% consuming less than two alcoholic drinks per day, and only 10% currently smoking.

In addition, the baseline survey results showed that patients had high level health literacy, and were already engaging in healthy lifestyle behaviours. It was therefore difficult to measure any significant changes to these indicators. The majority of the patients enrolled in the study believed the practice that they attended to be 'health promoting' at baseline and at follow-up.

Compared with population-wide health indicators, patients in this study (n=498) were more likely to achieve the recommended behaviours in the areas of healthy eating, physical activity, alcohol consumption, and tobacco use. The patient health self-assessment was viewed by patients as a helpful indicator of goal behaviours, and was helpful in guiding discussions with their healthcare professional to relevant areas.

Health promotion was generally viewed positively by patients and practitioners. However, there may be opportunities to increase practitioner confidence in delivering health promotion messages, through the provision of education and supporting resources.

For more information about the project, or for resources for both consumers and practices, please visit www.healthpromotingpractices.net



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