

Regional Group of the Association for the Study of Obesity

TOPIC: 'The emerging role of technology in the management of obesity'

The North East Obesity Forum held a meeting on Wednesday 30th April 2014 at Newcastle University where the emerging role of technology in the management of obesity was discussed. Approximately 50 delegates attended the session where 4 speakers presented. An overview for each presenter is described below.

Anna Sherrington – PhD Student, Institute of Health & Society, Newcastle University

Title: Evaluation of an internet-based weight loss intervention

This presentation highlighted the need for further research into alternative treatments for the management of obesity. As internet weight loss studies have found mixed findings, the speaker suggested that further work into internet weight loss interventions are needed. An internet-based weight loss intervention for obese post-partum females and obese males diagnosed with type 2 diabetes was described along with the work completed to test its acceptability and feasibility. The speaker described the user journey and the processes involved in reviewing and refining the intervention. A pilot randomised controlled trial was described for each target group and early findings were presented. Qualitative work with health professionals and participants was also completed and discussed which suggested that this intervention was suitable for use with both groups. It was concluded that this pilot work provided encouraging results to inform a future definitive trial.

Dr Falko Sniehotta – Reader in Health Psychology, Institute of Health & Society, Newcastle University

Title: “Supporting Weight Loss Maintenance with an evidence informed mobile phone intervention: The NU:Level trial”

This presentation began by describing the issue of obesity among adults nationally and research investigating widely available weight loss methods. The speaker then discussed the effects of weight loss interventions and long term weight loss maintenance. A systematic review and meta-analyses of randomised controlled trials of long term maintenance of weight loss was presented (now available at <http://www.bmj.com/content/348/bmj.g2646>). The speaker then described their current phase of work which aims to develop a scalable mobile phone intervention to help initially obese adults who have lost a clinically significant amount of weight to maintain the weight loss. The model for developing and evaluating complex interventions and factors explaining maintenance of behaviour change was discussed, with a particular focus on the efficacy of daily self weighing. The speaker concluded the presentation with an overview of the intervention materials, stages of delivery of the mobile phone intervention, and the design of the RCT (NU:Level trial) currently being completed to test the effectiveness of the intervention developed.

Prof Lucy Yardley, Professor of Health Psychology, University of Southampton & Scott Lloyd, Health Improvement Commissioner, Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council

Title: “Positive Online Weight Reduction (POWeR): web-based support for weight management”

This presentation discussed the background to, aims, content and format of POWeR (Positive Online Weight Reduction), a web-based support tool for weight management. The characteristics incorporated into the POWeR tool to foster credibility and encourage adherence and long-term maintenance were also described. A series of studies using POWeR in various settings were presented. This included discussion of qualitative work completed with POWeR users and a feasibility

study with follow-up at 6 and 12 months. An RCT of POWeR in a community setting in the North East was also described, which aimed to examine whether brief telephone support could enhance uptake and adherence to POWeR. Methods of recruitment were presented (which included the MOSAIC public sector tool) along with the findings from this phase of work. An on-going study using POWeR in a workplace setting was explained, this will examine the use of a smart phone app with a focus on uptake, usage and engagement rather than effectiveness. The presenters described the areas in which this work is being completed and that employers are welcome to sign up to this trial until 1st July 2014. Further details about this can be obtained from Scott Lloyd.