



Are early childhood education and care services implementing effective and recommended nutrition and physical activity programs?

Issue

We can improve child health by ensuring nutrition and physical activity promoting programs that can have the highest impact are routinely implemented in childcare settings. To do this, we need to identify programs that are not only effective but able to be implemented routinely to large numbers of services in the community.

This program of research will identify which early childhood education and care based programs and practices are effective and recommended. It will pinpoint where there are opportunities to implement programs and practices that are not currently being routinely implemented.

How this research program will help

- We will use systematic reviews to determine which programs and practices are effective in improving nutrition and physical activity in childcare settings. This will result in a comprehensive summary of all literature in the field.
- We will also use systematic reviews to determine which programs and practices are recommended by health and regulatory bodies as published in policies and guidelines for early childhood education and care settings. This will provide evidence of support for the interventions described above.
- A national survey of childcare services will determine the extent to which effective (and recommended) programs and practices are being implemented in childcare. We will also ask about the barriers to implementing the programs, the feasibility, and what factors promote sustainability and scalability of these programs
- We will use the systematic review and national survey evidence to map where there are evidence to practice gaps. By doing this, we will determine where the gaps are for program implementation.
- Policy-makers, practitioners and researchers will then rank priority programs for implementation based on their effectiveness, scalability and feasibility.

Our research will reveal if childcare services are implementing the nutrition and physical activity programs and practices that evidence shows are effective and policy and guidelines recommend. From there, our findings will help policy makers and practitioners know where to invest to support implementation of effective and recommended nutrition and physical activity programs in childcare to improve child health.

How we are conducting this research

- Systematic reviews of effective childcare-based nutrition and physical activity programs and practices
- Systematic reviews of dietary and physical activity guidelines and policies published by health agencies and childcare regulatory bodies in high income countries.
- National telephone survey of preschool and long day care services
- Prioritisation process of interventions with greatest impact

Timeline

| Task | Date | Progress |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| Systematic reviews of effective interventions | August 2022 | Mix of completed and nearing completion |
| Systematic review of policies and guidelines | February 2021 | Complete |
| National survey | Preliminary results expected mid 2022 | Complete, analysis underway. |



| | | |
|------------------------|------|-------------|
| Prioritisation process | 2023 | In planning |
|------------------------|------|-------------|

What we know so far

Our reviews have identified a number of effective healthy eating and physical activity programs and practices that largely align with policy recommendations. To ensure the impact of these programs and practices, through the next stage of our research program, we will describe specific characteristics of the programs and practices, and prioritise interventions for implementation.

About us

This research is being conducted by researchers at the National Centre of Implementation Science (NCOIS), an NHMRC funded Centre for Research Excellence associated with the University of Newcastle. The research is led by Associate Professor Serene Yoong from Swinburne University of Technology and will form part of a PhD student project by Ms Melanie Lum.

Key contact: Associate Professor Serene Yoong - Serene.Yoong@health.nsw.gov.au



Our research asks:

Are Australian
childcare
services
implementing
effective and
recommended
nutrition and
physical activity
programs?



NATIONAL CENTRE OF
IMPLEMENTATION SCIENCE