

How can we sustain the delivery of chronic disease prevention programs? A review of strategies

PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMARY - JANUARY 2025



KEY MESSAGES

Sustaining health programs is important for long-term chronic disease prevention. This review shows that some strategies may help support the long-term delivery of programs.

Not many studies have focused on sustainment strategies. While two out of three studies found positive results, more research is needed to better understand what works best in different settings.

Education and ongoing support are key. Common strategies that helped sustain programs included developing and distributing educational materials, preparing champions, and offering continuous training.

What is this review about?

This review asked what strategies help keep effective chronic disease prevention programs going in both community and clinical settings.

Why is this important?

When chronic disease prevention programs are discontinued prematurely, their impact is greatly reduced. This means we're not helping as many people stay as healthy as we could. It's also a waste of the millions of dollars spent on program development and initial delivery.

What did we do?

We reviewed studies published up until November 2022, focusing on randomised controlled trials that tested strategies to support the long-term delivery of evidence-based programs that address risky behaviours like poor diet, inactivity, smoking, and alcohol use, in clinical and community settings.



What is included in this review?

Only three studies met our criteria for inclusion.

- Two studies were based in community settings
 - Sports clubs in Australia, and after-school clubs in the United States of America (USA)
- One study was conducted in a clinical setting
 - Community healthcare centres in the USA
- 25 strategies were tested across these studies, but only 2 of these strategies were used in all three studies.



What were our main findings?

- 2 out of 3 studies found that sustainment strategies positively impacted the long-term delivery of the programs.
- Common sustainment strategies included:
 - Developing and distributing educational materials
 - Identifying and training champions
 - Ongoing staff training



A summary of the limitations of the evidence

There are few studies on this topic, and the reporting of strategies varied, making it hard to draw firm conclusions.

More detailed and consistent research is needed to better understand the most effective sustainment strategies.

About Us

This research was conducted by researchers at the University of Newcastle, Hunter New England Population Health, Hunter Medical Research Institute, Monash University, Ulster University, Austin Health, McMaster University, Deakin University and the National Centre of Implementation Science (NCOIS).

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