

The efficacy of the internet for physical activity promotion among university students

Submission date 21/05/2016	Recruitment status No longer recruiting	☐ Prospectively registered ☐ Protocol
Registration date 24/05/2016	Overall study status Completed	☐ Statistical analysis plan ☒ Results
Last Edited 26/05/2016	Condition category Other	☐ Individual participant data

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims

Sedentary behaviour (taking part in less than an hour a week of physical activity) is associated with an increased risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some forms of cancer, as well as poorer mental wellbeing. It is a growing problem, and is thought to contribute significantly to the high levels of obesity worldwide. It is well known that physical activity (PA) is greatly beneficial to health. Despite this however, the PA levels of young people have been reported to be below the levels sufficient to gain the health benefits exercise can offer. Use of Internet to promote PA is a promising area but studies looking into its effectiveness have produced mixed results. The aim of this study is to examine the effectiveness of an internet-based physical activity promotion programme.

Who can participate?

Full time undergraduate students with a sedentary lifestyle.

What does the study involve?

Participants are randomly allocated to one of three groups. Those in the first group take part in an internet-based behaviour change program designed to promote PA. It is made up of 20 sessions which include reading material about the benefits of exercise and a workbook to complete. Those in the second group receive the same materials as the first group, but the sessions are delivered in weekly, hour-long, face-to-face group classes. Those in the third group continue as usual and do not take part in any behaviour change programs. At the start of the study and again after three and six months, all participants complete a number of questionnaires in order to find out if their physical activity levels have changed.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?

Participants may benefit from improving their levels of physical activity. There are no notable risks involved with participating in this study.

Where is the study run from?

The Chinese University of Hong Kong (China)

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
September 2007 to April 2009

Who is funding the study?
The Chinese University of Hong Kong (China)

Who is the main contact?
Dr Elean Leung
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Contact information

Type(s)
Scientific

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Additional identifiers

Protocol serial number
4450244

Study information

Scientific Title
The Efficacy of the Internet for Physical Activity Promotion among University Students - Randomized Controlled Trial

Study objectives
Participants in the internet-based intervention group will demonstrate an improvement in physical activity participation to a similar extent as their counterparts in the face-to-face intervention group.

Ethics approval required
Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)

The Survey and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, 07/10/2010, ref: 4450244

Study design

Three-arm randomized controlled trial

Primary study design

Interventional

Study type(s)

Quality of life

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied

Physical activity level of university students

Interventions

Participants are stratified by gender and stage of behavior change before being randomly allocated via a computer-generated randomization sequence (GraphPad Software, Inc.) into one of the three groups by a statistician who was blinded to the intervention assignment. The participants were notified by e-mail about their randomization allocation.

Internet-based intervention group: Participants are provided with a 20-session online behaviour change program entitled the Active Living Every Day (ALED) program. This involves read the program materials and to then complete the activities via the Internet at a convenient time and place at a rate of one session per week. A complimentary copy of the ALED workbook is provided with the online course. The program contents are designed for learning the behavior modification skills.

Face-to-face intervention group: Participants receive the same information as the internet-based group but in a face-to-face class. They take part in weekly hour-long session for 14 weeks at a university. The discussion class is instructed by a licensed ALED facilitator and is also complemented by the ALED workbook. During the classes, cognitive and behavioral skills for adopting and maintaining an active lifestyle are discussed.

Control group: Participants do not take part in any intervention and continue as usual for the duration of the study.

Follow up involves sending online IPAQ and Stage of Change questionnaires three and six months after the commencement of the intervention to all participants.

Intervention Type

Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)

Physical activity levels are assessed by the International Physical Activity Questionnaire short form at baseline, 3 and 6 months

Key secondary outcome(s))

Stage of change assessed by Stage of Exercise Change Questionnaire at baseline, 3 and 6 months.

Completion date

30/04/2009

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria

1. Having access to the Internet
2. Being a current full-time undergraduate student
3. Not having any physical conditions that would severely restrict the ability to be physically active
4. Having a total PA score of less than 3,000 MET·minutes per week, at the low- or moderate-activity category of the guidelines for data processing and analysis of the IPAQ

Participant type(s)

Healthy volunteer

Healthy volunteers allowed

No

Age group

Adult

Sex

All

Key exclusion criteria

1. Having any physical condition that would severely restrict the ability to be physically active
2. Having a total PA score of more than 3,000 MET·minutes per week

Date of first enrolment

08/09/2008

Date of final enrolment

30/10/2008

Locations

Countries of recruitment

China

Study participating centre

The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Shatin

Hong Kong

China

852

Sponsor information

Organisation

The Chinese University of Hong Kong

ROR

<https://ror.org/00t33hh48>

Funder(s)

Funder type

University/education

Funder Name

The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

IPD sharing plan summary

Available on request

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Basic results		25/05/2016		No	No