

Research Fellowship Scheme

F2 - Evaluation of Uptake and Impact of Physical Activity Guidelines for Preschool Children in Hong Kong

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Introduction and Project Objectives: The first guidelines for physical activity and sedentary behaviour for children aged 2 to 6 years was first released in 2012 by the Department of Health and a revised version was published in 2018. This study investigated the awareness and knowledge of the guidelines among parents and preschool teachers, examined the associations of awareness and knowledge with beliefs, intention, and children's physical activity and sedentary behaviour as suggested by health communication theory, and identified perceived barriers and facilitators to implementation and develop messages recommendations supplementing the guidelines through focus group interviews.

Methods: A complementary (quantitative and qualitative) research approach was applied. 351 children and their parents were recruited from 8 kindergartens. Children worn an activPAL accelerometer for seven consecutive days to measure physical activity and sedentary time. Parents reported their child's sedentary screen time and sociodemographic information, and responded to questions assessing their awareness, knowledge, belief and intention of the guidelines. Focus group interviews were conducted among a group of parents and teachers to gauge their feedback on the guidelines.

Results: Very few children (14.6%) met the physical activity guidelines and 41.6% of them met the screen time recommendations. Awareness and knowledge of the guidelines was low within parents. Being aware of the having better knowledge was associated with better belief of the guidelines and higher intention of the guidelines' adoption. Parents' awareness of the guidelines was positively related with children's physical activity, while better knowledge and higher intention within parents were favourably correlated with children's sedentary behaviour. Parents and teachers generally agreed with the recommendations, however, they identified various barriers for implementation. They also suggested using innovative mediums for dissemination and communication.

Conclusion and Discussion: Compliance with the PA guidelines is low for preschool children in Hong Kong. There is a lack of awareness and adequate knowledge of the physical activity guidelines among parents. The guidelines should be supplemented with clear messages catering for local needs and to ensure that precursors to behaviour change could be motivated. Certain segments of the populations should be targeted in future health promotion. Increasing stakeholders' awareness and knowledge of the guidelines may be helpful to enhancing belief and intention of adopting the guidelines.

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