Chapter XVI

Using the Internet in a Physical Activity Health Promotion Campaign: The 10,000 Steps Rockhampton Project

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ABSTRACT

The 10,000 Steps Rockhampton project is a community-based, multi-strategy health promotion program focusing on physical activity and the social determinants of health in a regional Australian setting. As yet there is no available literature about the process of constructing health promotion Web sites. The chapter describes the processes involved in the construction
and evaluation of a physical activity health promotion site. The static side of the site gives health promotion information and messages related to physical activity, along with contact information and registration information for the project. The dynamic side of the site allows online tracking of daily-accumulated physical activity.

INTRODUCTION

There now exists a general consensus regarding the benefits of a physically active lifestyle. Researchers, practitioners, and public health officers concur that an active lifestyle contributes to increased health and relief of economic strain (Stephenson, Bauman, Armstrong, Smith & Bellow, 2000). Specifically, recent evidence has shown relationships between physical activity and lowered risk of many non-communicable diseases. These findings, well summarised by the 1996 US Surgeon General’s report, present epidemiological evidence of the graded health benefits of physical activity for the reductions of coronary heart disease (CHD), some cancers, Type-2 diabetes, injury reduction (including falls in the elderly) and mental health (Bouchard, 2001; US Department of Health and Human Services, 1996).

The US Surgeon General’s report recommends at least 30 minutes of moderate activity on most, if not all days of the week as the duration and frequency necessary for health benefits. Ways of communicating this message to those who are presently inactive are varied. The ultimate goal of physical activity health promotion is to motivate the inactive population (around 50% of the population in most Westernised countries) to first consider becoming active, and second actually become engaged in regular health-related physical activity. Attempts to achieve this goal have been through a number of different theoretical frameworks in a number of different media. These include the use of new technologies such as the Internet to achieve these goals. To this point, there are no published accounts of the processes used in the methodical construction and evaluation of Internet health promotion sites. To the authors’ knowledge there are no published articles dealing specifically with population physical activity health promotion online. The authors searched all relevant health databases including pubmed (medline), ovid (current contents and psychinfo), and the Web using google.com. The primary aim of this chapter is to describe the processes involved in the construction and evaluation of an online health promotion tool for a community-wide physical activity health promotion project called 10,000 Steps Rockhampton.

The 10,000 Steps Rockhampton project is a community-based, multi-strategy health promotion program focussing on physical activity and the social determinants of health. The overarching goal of the project is to work with a
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