A health promotion intervention to improve lifestyle choices and health outcomes in people with psychosis: a research programme including the IMPaCT RCT

Fiona Gaughran,1,2* Daniel Stahl,3 Anita Patel,4,5 Khalida Ismail,6 Shubulade Smith,7,8 Kathryn Greenwood,9,10 Zerrin Atakan,2 Poonam Gardner-Sood,2 Dominic Stringer,3 David Hopkins,11 John Lally,1,2,12 Marta Di Forti,13,14,15 Brendon Stubbs,16,17 Philippa Lowe,18 Maurice Arbuthnott,19 Margaret Heslin,20 Anthony S David21 and Robin M Murray2,14,15

1National Psychosis Service, South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, London, UK
2Department of Psychosis Studies, Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience, King’s College London, London, UK
3Department of Biostatistics and Health Informatics, Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience, King’s College London, London, UK
4Anita Patel Health Economics Consulting Ltd, London, UK
5Centre for Primary Care and Public Health, Blizard Institute, Queen Mary University of London, London, UK
6Department of Psychological Medicine, Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience, King’s College London, London, UK
7Department of Forensic and Neurodevelopmental Science, Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience, King’s College London, London, UK
8Forensic Services, South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, London, UK
9Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, Worthing, UK
10School of Psychology, University of Sussex, Brighton, UK
11Institute of Diabetes, Endocrinology and Obesity, King’s Health Partners, London, UK
12Department of Psychiatry, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, Beaumont Hospital, Dublin, Ireland
13Social, Genetic & Developmental Psychiatry Centre, Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience, King’s College, London, UK
14Department of Psychiatry, Experimental Biomedicine and Clinical Neuroscience (BIONEC), University of Palermo, Palermo, Italy
15South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, London, UK
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Plain English summary

Background

People with psychosis have poor physical health and reduced life expectancy, with cardiovascular
disease causing about 60% of early deaths in this population.

Aims

We aimed to record the physical health risks and lifestyle choices of those with early psychosis, devise
a way to help people make healthier choices and test whether or not this improved their quality of life.

Methods

First, we followed people for the year after they first presented with psychosis, documenting their mental
and physical health and their lifestyle choices. Second, we then worked with carers and service users to
develop a health promotion intervention, IMPaCT therapy, to address exercise, diet, smoking, alcohol and
substance use, plus diabetes management where relevant. Finally, we ran a trial to see whether or not
IMPaCT therapy helped and if it was good value. The work took place between 2008 and 2014.

Results

Patients with their first episode of psychosis had many risk factors for heart disease, such as obesity,
diabetes, high levels of cholesterol, poor diet and little exercise.

In the IMPaCT therapy trial, we recruited over 100 care co-ordinators and split them into two groups
randomly; half were trained in IMPaCT therapy and offered supervision of their practice, and the
other half provided standard care. We reassessed the patients 1 year later to see whether or not there
was any difference in quality of life and physical or mental health. We found no extra benefit for the
patients allocated to IMPaCT therapy compared with those receiving standard care, although if at
least 3 hours of IMPaCT therapy was received on top of standard care, waist circumference reduced.
Costs of the intervention were low.

These findings signify the difficulty in reducing risk factors for physical health problems once these are
established.
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