

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

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Plain English summary

The IMPaCT RCT

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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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