

# Text messaging and financial incentives to encourage weight loss in men with obesity: the Game of Stones feasibility RCT

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**Declared competing interests of authors:** Alison Avenell was chief investigator of the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Health Technology Assessment (HTA)-funded REBALANCE project [Avenell A, Robertson C, Skea Z, Jacobsen E, Boyers D, Cooper D, *et al.* Bariatric surgery, lifestyle interventions and orlistat for severe obesity: the REBALANCE mixed-methods systematic review and economic evaluation. *Health Technol Assess* 2018;**22**(68)]. Andrew Elders reports a grant from NIHR during the conduct of the study. Mark Grindle reports that he is managing director of Eos Digital Health Ltd (Dunblane, UK), which is sole owner of the copyright of the Digital Narrative Approach. Frank Kee is a member of the Public Health Research (PHR) programme Research Funding Board and the PHR Prioritisation Group (board member 2009–2014 and chairperson 2014–2019). Pat Hoddinott was a member of the HTA Commissioning Board from March 2014 to March 2019.

Published September 2020

DOI: 10.3310/phr08110

## Plain English summary

**The Game of Stones feasibility RCT**

Public Health Research 2020; Vol. 8: No. 11

DOI: 10.3310/phr08110

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## Plain English summary

People with obesity are at greater risk of conditions such as type 2 diabetes mellitus and heart disease. Weight loss programmes can improve health, but men seldom participate in these. Together with men, we designed a weight loss programme that included text messages either alone or combined with cash incentives. We aimed to find out if it is possible to deliver this programme and if it appeals to men.

A total of 1045 UK men with obesity answered a survey to help design the study. Discussions with men, community workers and experts provided feedback on how to recruit men, on the texts and on the weight loss targets.

Men in two areas of Scotland were invited by their general practitioner to join the study or signed up at community locations; 105 men with obesity were recruited from all walks of life within 4 months. Men were allocated randomly to one of three groups: texts only, texts and financial incentives, or a 12-month waiting list for texts. A mock cheque was given to the men in the texts-only and texts and financial incentives groups at the start. Money was secured if weight loss targets were met, which was paid at 12 months. After 3, 6 and 12 months, we measured men's weight, asked them questions about their experiences and interviewed some of them. Three out of four men completed the full 12-month programme. Many men liked the texts, but some were less happy, dropped out of the study or requested to stop receiving the texts. Men in all three groups lost some weight, with those receiving the texts and incentives losing most. Feedback from men helped us to write a different style of texts.

In summary, it was possible to recruit men with obesity; most completed the programme and were happy with it. A larger study, using a choice of text styles and incentives, is now required to discover if the programme reduces obesity in men.



# Public Health Research

ISSN 2050-4381 (Print)

ISSN 2050-439X (Online)

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The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the PHR programme as project number 14/185/09. The contractual start date was in June 2016. The final report began editorial review in December 2018 and was accepted for publication in September 2019. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The PHR editors and production house have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors' report and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the final report document. However, they do not accept liability for damages or losses arising from material published in this report.

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