

Title: Physician Perceptions of Behaviour Change Counselling Skills and Training

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Background: Non-communicable chronic diseases (NCDs) linked to poor health behaviours represent a major worldwide issue. While behaviour change counselling (BCC) has shown efficacy in improving patient health outcomes, there are a number of barriers to physician training in this approach.

Objective: To inform the development of a BCC training program based on the needs of health care professionals, this study aimed to gather physician insights on the matter.

Methods: An integrated knowledge translation (iKT) approach was used to gather input from medical specialists who routinely treat NCDs. Physicians were invited to complete an online questionnaire (LimeSurvey) on the importance of addressing health behaviours, confidence in their own BCC skills and necessity of training.

Results: A total of 80 physicians (22 cardiologists, 22 respirologists, 15 internists, 21 general practitioners) from 6 provinces completed the survey. Addressing health risk behaviours was ranked as very important (9.1/10). However, respondents were only moderately confident (5.3/10) in their BCC skills and moderately interested (6.3/10) in BCC training programs. Interestingly, years of experience only affected one of these components, contradicting previous literature. The level of confidence was higher for physicians with 0-5 years ($M=6.9$, $SD=1.4$) of experience compared to those with 11-15 years ($M=5.1$, $SD=1.4$), suggesting a drop in confidence with time ($t=4.116$, $p<0.05$).

Discussion: Results highlight physicians' perceived importance and willingness to acquire BCC skills, which may be more relevant for more experienced physicians whose confidence seems to drop over time. Data will inform the design of a BCC training program and assessment tool.

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