

Community Wide Campaigns: An Effective Intervention to Improve Physical Activity

In the United States, physical inactivity is found to be a substantial contributive factor in increased public health issues and illnesses. The necessity for improved physical activity and physical fitness is recognized in modern society as a very important preventive measure to ensure a healthy life style. *Task Force on Community Preventive Services* recommends community-wide campaigns as a strategy to be effective in increasing physical activity and improving physical fitness among adults and children. This paper is discussing the findings of the Task force and evaluates the effectiveness of community-wide campaign strategies in increasing physical activity and improving physical fitness in communities. The paper also attempts to suggest strategies that are helpful in maintaining a healthy and active lifestyle.

Physical inactivity is a major health concern in the United States as a number of diseases are attributed to the lack of physical fitness and activity. It has been considered that most people in the country lack adequate physical activity. This serious health problem can be efficiently addressed with community interventions. Community- wide campaign strategies can play a vital role in increasing the physical activity levels of community members in all age groups and in all ethnic groups. The recommendations of the *Task Force* are a compilation of tested interventions that were designed to improve physical activity and physical fitness at the community level. Some of the recommended interventions may yield only moderate levels of behavior changes. But still they are relevant and effective in public health improvement as they are targeted at populations as opposed to individuals. One of the very important public health benefits of community interventions on physical activity is the improved activity among the inactive populations. This is more important than the increased activity among the already active people. Evidences show that community interventions can produce significant public health benefits

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among communities if implemented on a broader aspect. (Task Force on Community Preventive Services, 2002).

Communitywide campaigns on physical activity are continued efforts that are evidently visible. They are comprehensive operations to convey the message of promoting physical activity. Community wide campaigns make use of radio, television, newspaper and many other communicating aspects. These interventions include a number of different components such as support and self-help groups and physical activity counseling. Awareness programs through schools, worksites, and community health fairs are included in the interventions. Community wide health education increases the awareness about physical exercise and activity. These programs can enhance the intentions of individuals to be physically active. According to the evaluations and analysis performed by the *Task Force*, no negative effects were reported. Yet, the study observed that sufficient information was absent to evaluate the economic effects. ((Task Force on Community Preventive Services, 2002). According to CDC, community wide campaigns is one of the important strategies that can be implemented in communities to promote physical activity. The traditional methods of health promotion focused more on educating and motivating people for increasing their physical activity. Communitywide campaigns involve a more comprehensive level of influences that has its impacts on individual, interpersonal, institutional, and at community levels. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011).

I personally agree to the findings of the *Task Force* that community wide campaigns are effective in increasing physical activity and improving physical fitness among children and adults in communities. The *Community Guide* presents a number of evidences in the form of research reports. Ten different studies were conducted on various communities of people including all age groups and from various ethnic groups. The assessment of these studies could

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establish an average increase of about 4% in the proportion of people performing physical activity as an effect of community wide campaigns. Similarly, a 16% increase was found in average energy expenditure. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011).

Based on my research, I believe a few among the ten strategies listed in the CDC report, are very effective in maintaining a healthy and active lifestyle. First among them is community wide campaigns. I think this strategy is effective in increasing the physical activity and it can improve the community capacity to result in changed health behaviors among diverse populations. With well-trained health service professionals and improved resources, community wide campaigns strategy can be beneficial for better health outcomes for any community. Another effective strategy is point-of-decision prompts. Effective implementation of this strategy can be very effective in encouraging people to choose stairs instead of elevators and escalators. Active transport to school is a good strategy for promoting healthy physical activity among children and youth. It will include interventions to encourage youth to participate in active transportation such as walking, bicycling or skating all the way to school. Enhanced school based physical education also is an effective strategy to improve physical activity among youth. It will include interventions promoting children and youth to engage in amusing physical activities at various levels of intensity. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011).

From my readings and understanding, I believe community wide campaigns are dependable methods to be included in health promotion strategies for improving physical activities among adults and children. Similarly the above said strategies also are useful for maintaining a healthy active life style.

References

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