An investigation of a community based physical activity intervention for adult men, 'Men on the Move'

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Background
Men in Ireland have a life expectancy 4.5 years lower than women, are less likely to engage in healthy lifestyle or preventive health behaviours, and are less likely to use health services. Physical activity is a prophylactic to many of the chronic conditions affecting men. Traditional patterns of male behaviour pose inimitable challenges in targeting health behaviour change to men. Research suggests that men respond better to 'men-friendly' approaches to promoting physical activity. This study reports on the physical fitness and body morphology adaptations of Irish men who engaged in a 12-week community-based physical activity programme; Men on the Move.
Methods
927 inactive males were recruited across 8 counties (4 intervention [n = 501]; 4 comparison-in-waiting [n = 426]). The programme consisted of structured group exercise for 1 hour twice weekly, two facilitated health-related workshops (diet and well-being), an information booklet, a 5km celebration event and a pedometer for independent physical activity sessions. Participants were assessed at baseline, 12, 26 and 52 weeks. Inferential statistical analysis ($p \leq 0.05$) were undertaken on the between group change scores from baseline at 12, 26 and 52 week time-points. The intervention targeted a 1 MET increase in aerobic fitness (equivalent to a 15% risk reduction), 5% weight reduction and 5cm waist reduction (10% risk reduction).
Results
Results for the intervention group at 12W, 26W and 52W time-points ($p \leq 0.05$) respectively found 73%, 71% and 52% achieved a 1 MET increase in fitness; 14%, 16% and 22% achieved a 5% reduction in body weight; and 49%, 46% and 43% achieved a 5cm reduction in waist circumference.
Conclusions
Supporting inactive men to increase their physical fitness can lead to significant reductions in health risks up to 52 weeks post baseline. A more targeted, gender-specific approach to public health interventions is needed to effectively engage inactive men in physical activity.

Key messages:

- Men on the Move is innovative in its gender specific approach to a public health issue and is the first step to establishing a nationwide physical activity programme targeting inactive men in Ireland.
- Men on the Move has the potential to inform evidence-based and sustainable practice in targeting increased physical activity in community-based settings among a 'hard to reach' population group.